

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
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MARCH 2026

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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

Rev. Dr. James L. Mills, Sr.

March is Women's Her(His)story Month. As a faith community, we will be intentional about lifting the voices of women and girls.

I have been reflecting on the concept of Women's Her(His)story Month, and I am struck by the idea of celebrating and honoring the women who have shaped and influenced our lives. It is a reminder to acknowledge the strong and influential women in my own life, and to appreciate their determination, compassion, and heart for their communities. This concept has given me a fresh perspective on the often-marginalized contributions of women and the importance of recognizing and lifting their voices and stories.

Learning about the struggles and triumphs of my grandmother, The Right Reverend Doris Virginia Mills, has also brought nuance to my understanding of gender roles and societal expectations. Her determination to pursue a career in ministry despite being a middle-aged black woman in a society that devalued both qualities is a testament to her strength and resilience. It is a reminder to never underestimate the power of determination and to challenge societal norms and expectations.

Some of us may not realize that God is a spirit who has both masculine and feminine attributes. Our society, and especially religious circles, rail against grey areas. The truth is, most of our lives are lived in the grey, not in the stark contrast of a black-and-white binary. As we grow, we become aware of how God's attributes shape our understanding of gender and spirituality. My hope is that, as we grow, we are inspired to recognize and appreciate the balance the divine feminine brings to our often action-oriented world, and to honor and bless these qualities in both women and men.

Allow Women's Her(His)story Month to challenge you and me to see things from a fresh perspective, with nuance to our understanding of gender and societal expectations and provide clarity on the divine feminine and its influence in our lives. I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the women who have shaped my life, and to deepen my understanding of the power and strength of the divine feminine.

Update on Pastor Ruzana

As many of you know, Pastor Ruzana Nehonde was deported earlier in February, back to her country of Zimbabwe after living and working in Massachusetts for 28 years. This is her account of the deportation process.



"My son didn't expect my deportation he doesn't know what to do because I told him when I was already in the plane. I came with nothing they even lost my medicine for blood pressure, diabetes, dizziness and iron tablets. I'm so broken to be told that all my children (she is referring to the children she looks after in Zim) stopped school due to lack of money. They don't know that I'm here yet."

"I went to 4 jails from Tuesday after coming from sleeping in the ER. I was not even allowed to go back to the Dorm to pick my stuff including all my beautiful letters and cards even to say bye to my friends. They lost all my clothes. I came with dirty clothes no shower or brushing teeth since Monday till yesterday when I arrived. (She arrived in Harare on a Friday.). The harsh treatments affected me that I couldn't walk the sugar was very low BP very high no medicine and no money to buy. I was put in the wheelchair at the Zim airport. I thank God I'm alive. I'm just concerned about where my son will start from here without me. I'm just praying. I know the Lord will provide for us to start again."

I am sending my picture to send to my beautiful ladies in Wakefield. Tell them Ice lost all my beautiful cards but your love remains in my heart. Tell also David May from Maine (David attend North Church in Portsmouth) that I received his letter and I replied but the next day before mailing all my letters for the ladies I was taken to the airport and was put in jail in Ohio so all those letters were lost. They broke my heart."

This is all so pathetic. Ruzana is now staying with her sister in Zimbabwe. The mission travel team hopes to see her before we depart.

Connie Littlefield

Author Highlight

Kenneth W. Osbeck
(1924-2017)

Kenneth W. Osbeck was a native of Michigan who earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of Michigan. He was well-known for his sixteen books related to hymn stories and music ministry and was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Cornerstone University. He taught music and fine arts for 35 years on the faculty of Cornerstone University and the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music. He served as minister of music in seven churches in the Grand Rapids area and directed music for the Children's Bible Hour, Youth for Christ, the Radio Bible Class, and Diadem Records.

His books about the stories behind our hymns will live on as a memorial to his love for God and our worship of Him. Our church library has these books in the Church History section of the Fellowship Hall Library: [One Hundred & One Hymn Stories](#) and [One Hundred and One More Hymn Stories](#).

Linda Petkunas, Church Librarian

Lenten Faith Formation

Faith Formation during the month of March will see us continuing our journey 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. In addition, we will end each class discussing devotions from the *Stillspeaking Lenten Devotional - Outgrow*.

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

Building and Grounds Ministry



Building and Grounds Ministry
Paul Allen, Paul Burbank, Ron Kratt, George Ackerman

The Buildings and Grounds Ministry is a group of dedicated men who devote themselves to the care and maintenance of the physical building known as the First Congregational Church of Wakefield and the surrounding grounds. The group works to keep the inside and the outside of the Church in first-rate condition year round. They are available 24/7 for emergencies and to periodically stop by to ensure everything is in working order. The Church is in constant need of repair and upkeep.

According to the Bylaws, the Building and Grounds Ministry works to oversee indoor and outdoor maintenance and repair of our building and outdoor grounds and seeks to support the sharing of our space with various groups and individuals in the community.

More specifically, some of the projects and work handled by B&G include:

- General maintenance and upkeep of the interior and exterior of the building
- Furnace upkeep and repair
- Painting and repair work as required
- Annual Sanctuary and Parish Helpers Room Clean-up
- Upkeep and repair of kitchen appliances
- Checking oil and gas levels
- Temperature, heating and cooling oversight and maintenance
- Mowing lawns, trimming trees and bushes, and maintenance of flower beds
- Building fences

The work of this group is never-ending, especially since there is always something that needs to be done at the Church. The future plans for the Ministry include continuing the current upkeep and developing a Plan of Action to keep the church in good condition well into the future.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is Going Remote!

For the past several years, the Prayer Shawl Ministry has met monthly to knit and crochet prayer shawls for our members and friends who might benefit from a warm hug during times of sorrow and stress. We have not kept track of the numbers, but we know that hundreds of folks have benefited from our work. And we have used the time we spend together in prayer for those who received the shawls and others in our community going through tough times.

It has become apparent that our schedules no longer permit attendance at these gatherings; the last several meetings have been sparsely attended (to say the least). Therefore, we have decided on a new approach.

KEEP KNITTING!! KEEP CROCHETING!! KEEP OUR FRIENDS IN PRAYER!!

From now on, we are asking you to “work from home.” Like me, you may use the time you spend watching baseball working on a shawl. Many of you may have partially completed shawls in your work baskets. Many of you may have yarn set aside for a shawl, but haven’t gotten to use it yet. Now, when you finish one, bring it to Priscilla Frothingham or Harriet Wilson. We will see that it gets blessed and given to someone in need. And if you are not currently a member of this ministry, you can start participating on your own schedule. Right now, we have a number of small shawls, but we really need adult size ones. Please join us!

Priscilla Frothingham and Harriet Wilson

Wanted! Used Greeting Cards

Among the many talented people in our church is Linda Walter who makes amazingly creative greeting cards out of used cards. She welcomes your donation of all sorts of cards (please keep them intact) which she will use for her creations. Linda sells her cards at our Fairs and generously donates the proceeds to the Parish Helpers/ Church. You can drop your cards off in the Parish Helpers box in the narthex. We will collect them for her!

Holy Week Schedule

March 29 - Palm Sunday Worship – 10 a.m.
April 2 - Maundy Thursday Service – 6 p.m.
April 3 - Good Friday—Church will be open for prayer and reflection.
April 5- Easter Sunday Worship—10 a.m.

FUNdraising!

First - a huge shoutout to our fabulous cooks for a job well done! Our Souper Bowl Fundraiser raised over \$1500! Kudos to: Carol Jeffery, Sally Kratt, Julie Even-son, Jean Miccolo, Jo Szirbik, Connie Littlefield, Harriet Wilson, Rachel White, Chris Feddern, Kelly Fielders, Kaylee Fogg, Ginny Schweitzer, Evy Truhn, Patty Bur-bank, Nancy Dee, Andrea Costello, Julie Kessler, Gloria Ballinger, Morgan Gehring & Olivia. We had a great variety of soups, chilis and chowders to offer - and from all accounts, all was delicious!

Never a dull moment in fundraising - next up will be our Town Election Day Bake Sale. We're looking for our awesome bakers to step forward with their speciality treats. The bake sale will be on Tuesday, March 10th. We're looking for cookies, candies, brownies, small bread loaves; please no large items like cakes, pies or anything with frosting. We will be boxing and bag-ging the treats in order to maintain consistency, so we ask that you just bring in your treats in containers Mon-day (March 9) morning between 9-11.

Sigh - SAVERS fundraising is a question mark at the moment. Many of you have probably heard that "our" Savers down in Newington has closed down due to the massive construction project going on in that vicini-ty. There are a couple other Saver locations but they're even farther and we need to weigh the benefits vs nega-tives of driving that extra distance. We most likely will still do the Savers dropoff after our Yard Sale, since it's a great way to clean up afterwards. BUT for now, please don't drop bags off at the church!

And - Going forward we have other fundraisers in the works. May will be the Pride Day Cookie Walk and we're hoping to do a Service Auction in June. For the Service Auction, we'll be reaching out for donations - where a service auction donation could be something along the lines of a boat ride for 6 on your lake, dog-sitting for a day, an afternoon of garden weed-ing ... you get the idea! Be thinking what you could of-fer up. More on this next month.

Julie Kessler

Hazel MacBrien Nursery School News

February was a busy and engaging month of learning. Students explored the letters **Dd**, **Hh**, and **Yy** through hands-on themes including dinosaurs, hearts, and dental health. Activities focused on early literacy, math skills, fine motor development, and creative projects. We were closed the final week for winter vacation and look forward to welcoming everyone back in March as we begin to look for signs of spring.

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Current Fundraising Status (as of 2/21/2026)

Budgeted Amount to Raise: \$12,000



Parish Helpers

The next Parish Helpers meeting will be held on March 12 at 1 p.m. Following a brief business meeting, attendees are invited to discuss and learn more about "Aging Well -- Taking Care of Business." What do we need to do to assure our financial security and legacy wishes. Parish Helper Member, Carol Lundgren, shares some strategies and "must do" efforts to make the best decisions sooner than later. Get your questions ready and we'll talk! Carol is a Volunteer Elder Advocate.

- * Do you have a Last Will and Testament made? If yes, how often do you review it to update changes?
- * Do you have a Durable Power of Attorney ... and do you know what makes it "Durable"?
- * Do you have Advance Directives document completed?
- * Do you know what DNR means?
- * Do you have a trusted person as a co-signer on bank accounts and investments?
- * Do you want to specifically list gifts to beloved family or friends ... or your church?
- * Do you have a "grab and go" binder of important information about YOU - in case of an emergency?
- * Do you want to be an organ donor and how to go about it?
- * What other questions come to mind?

Members and friends are warmly welcomed to attend! Hope to see you there!

Celebrations!

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 John Shaffer | 17 Jan Stanley |
| 4 Jimmy Hayford | 22 Laura Parsons |
| 8 Nathan Fogg | 24 Michelle Garland |
| 14 Penny Huckins | 29 Nathan Wilson |
| 15 Gemma Golden Stanek | 29 Nancy Perkins |
| 17 Jean-Michel Galabrun | 31 Katy Hagy |

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

| |
|--------------------------|
| 4 Stephen & Lauree Royle |
| 19 Ron & Sally Kratt |

It's okay to cry -- in church!

I admit I don't often cry in church, but was moved to tears when the Rev played a Dr. Martin Luther King Speech and video at the end of Black History Month in February. A sentence Dr. King uttered that stands out to me, even now, is "wealth ... is Commonwealth". That is a message that resonates. We have wealth because of our ability to earn money ... or perhaps receive money by investing, or by gifts when we are in need. Wealth does not grow on trees -- hmmm. Darn it!! But the Common Wealth is there ... we just have to seek it and empower it for good. Our church receives and gives. It's a wonderful thing -- almost like breathwork.

Carol Lundgren



**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

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:

Maryann D; 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.

Outreach Ministry

The First Congregational Church of Wakefield is a designated "5 for 5" Church which means we promote and contribute to 5 UCC Offerings annually. The offerings are Our Church's Wider Mission which promotes national and regional conferences; Strengthen the Church which focuses on leadership development, new church starts, and youth ministry; Neighbors in Need which promotes justice initiatives, advocacy, and American Indian ministry; The Christmas Fund which gives financial aid to active and retired clergy and lay employees; and One Great Hour of Sharing which supports disaster relief, refugee ministries and humanitarian development. One Great Hour of Sharing is usually collected during Lent and this year we will have the offering on March 15th. This year's theme is "Our Love Offering to the World". Our "love offering" is Jesus' call to Love Thy Neighbor, in action. We cannot be in areas of disaster, hungry or sick refugees, or those areas needing education and agricultural development but our dollars can be there for us!

Andrea Cosello, Outreach

MARCH 2026

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|-----------|
| 1 2nd Sunday in Lent Worship and Communion 10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 2 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. Choir 5:30 | 3 Faith Formation 12 noon | 4 Chair Yoga 10 a.m. Diaconate Meeting 5 p.m. | 5 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m. Evening Bible Study with Rev 5:30 | 6 World Day of Prayer NHUCC Women's Fellowship Pembroke, NH | 7 |
| 8 3rd Sunday In Lent Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 9 | 10 Election Day Faith Formation 12 noon Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m. | 11 Chair Yoga 10 a.m. | 12 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m. Parish Helpers Meeting 1 p.m. BPLOA Meeting p.m. | 13 | 14 |
| 15 4th Sunday In Lent Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour Leadership Council Mtg. | 16 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. Choir 5:30 Easter Flower Orders Due | 17 Prayer Shawl Ministry 10 a.m. Faith Formation 12 noon | 18 Chair Yoga 10 a.m. | 19 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m. Evening Bible Study with Rev 5:30 | 20 First Day Of Spring! | 21 |
| 22 5th Sunday of Lent Worship—10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 23 | 24 Faith Formation 12 noon Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m. | 25 Chair Yoga 10 a.m. | 26 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m. | 27 | 28 |
| 29 PALM SUNDAY Worship—10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 30 | 31 Faith Formation 12 noon | April 1 | 2 Maundy Thursday End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m. Maundy Thursday Service at 6 p.m. | 3 Good Friday Church open For prayer And reflection. | 4 |

EASTER FLOWER ORDER FORM



Spring is almost upon us and it is time to order lilies (triple blooms), tulips, and daffodils for our beautiful sanctuary and Easter Sunday Service! Plants may be purchased in honor of or in memory of loved ones. **Order deadline is March 16th.** After Easter Sunday Service, the plants can be taken home and planted in your gardens for a lasting remembrance. Please complete the order form and return it with your check payable to FCCW (please include “flowers” in the memo field). Please leave orders in the CLA’s mailbox or drop them in the white mailbox attached to the building. *Please contact Rachel White wquestions 603-520-2316.*

OF PLANTS _____ **EASTER LILIES @ \$17.50 each**

#OF PLANTS _____ **DAFFODILS @ \$14.00 each**

OF PLANTS _____ **TULIPS @ \$14.00 each**

IN MEMORY OF: _____
OR
IN HONOR OF _____

Donated by _____

Election Day in Wakefield

Tuesday, March 10th is an important day for our community. That’s when our town will hold its **local election** — including the race for Selectman and other issues that impact Wakefield’s future. Your voice matters. Whether you plan to vote in person or will be out of town.

Vote in Person

Voting will take place **Tuesday, March 10th** at the **Town Hall Opera House** from **8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.** Please remember to bring a valid photo ID.

Can’t Make It on March 10th? Request an Absentee Ballot—If you won’t be able to vote in person, you can request an absentee ballot from the Town Clerk’s office now. To do this:

1. **Complete an absentee ballot application** . Once completed you can present it in person at the Town Clerk’s office or mail it in to the Wakefield Town Hall. Attn: Town Clerk, 2 High St., Sanbornville, NH 03872.
2. **Provide the required identity verification** — this may include a copy of your photo ID or a notarized signature, or showing your photo ID in person when you pick up the application.
3. **Return your absentee ballot** — mailed ballots must be received by the Town Clerk **by 5 p.m. on Election Day (March 10th)** in order to be counted.

We Need Volunteers!

We enjoy this time together, but it doesn’t just magical-ly 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!

NHCUCC Women’s Fellowship!

Dates of importance:

March 6, Friday--World Day of Prayer--Nigeria, Conf. Ctr, Pembroke.

March 24, Tuesday--Board Meeting at Conference Center, Pembroke.

April 15, Wednesday--Spring Gathering, Deering NH.

Is your church or women's group willing to host our Fall Gathering 2026, World Day of Prayer 2027, Spring Gathering 2027, or Fall Gathering 2027?

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