

STEEPLE VIEWS



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

DR. TERRILYN (TERE) KRUEGER, PASTOR
REVEREND GEORGE HARVEY, PASTOR EMERITUS
JANUARY 2021

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WELCOME, DR. TERE KRUEGER

It is now 2021, and thanks to the hard, persistent work of the Search and Call Team we have a new pastor. Her name is Dr. Tere Krueger. The Spirit-led interactions between the S&C Team and Dr. Tere was just that, Spirit filled. The Team members listened to God's still small voice and, as She always does, provided the opportunities for both parties to come together. In other words, Dr. Tere is a perfect fit for our church. One of the S&C Team members, Julie Evenson, wrote descriptive words as they relate to Dr. T: "energy, instructor, leader, intuitive, intelligent, playful and prayerful". That just about covers most of the requirements we submitted way back in 2019 during those cottage meetings conducted by Reverend Alberta Wallace. An excerpt from Dr. Tere's profile demonstrates how the Holy Spirit works in connecting a pastor with a church:

"I now await God's match with a church who needs my gifts; creative thinking; leading vibrant, joyful, contemporary worship relating to families. I anticipate growing with a congregation who wants to mature in grace and awareness, in living out gifts of the Spirit and in serving their neighbors near and far."

For those of you who have not had the opportunity to read Dr. Tere's biography, here is a piece of her personal history. Dr. Teri is coming to us from her place of origin in Michigan where she grew up as the daughter of a Baptist minister. Her career path is rich in depth and lead her from work as a high school social studies teacher to the Director of career planning at Nazareth college in Kalamazoo. With each step in her professional life, she was growing in spirit and education. She got her Doctorate in counseling psychology in 1997 and worked as a counselor and then licensed Psychologist from 1987 to 2004. From 2000 - 2006 she attended a 6-year part time program of the UCC and DOC to train laity for ministry. During that time, she also worked as a realtor. For the past 17 years she has worked as pulpit supply and served as an Interim minister (Julie Evenson).

We wish to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Tere, who will begin her ministry on January 1st. And we look forward to the day we gather with her in our beloved sanctuary.

Prayerfully Submitted,
Donna V Ackerman

Stewardship Moment

Stewardship Message —Accessibility!

For this month's Stewardship Message we are going to start talking about a big topic for our Church – Accessibility! This is a very broad topic that has even more relevance in these pandemic times.

Traditionally this topic is about physical access to folks who have mobility, sight, or hearing issues. Our beautiful Church has made some great steps in opening up our Sanctuary to all. The elevator to all levels of the Church. The open pews in the center of our sanctuary. The new sound system and our efforts to make sure everyone can “hear” what is being said. Our large print bulletins (a favorite of Dr. B!). We have that all ready and waiting for us when we return to in-person worship.

However there is much, much more that we can do. Both for in-person worship and for this period of virtual worship.

For in-person worship there is the issue that our outer side door is very heavy. Someone using a cane or crutches would have a hard time opening it without help from someone else. Same goes for the elevator doors. It really takes a helper for most people. Then there is the fact that folks with mobility issues can make it into the Sanctuary but not up into the choir or bell lofts or more importantly the pulpit. These are all opportunities for us in the future to work on and improve.

For virtual worship the Stewardship team asks you to please give us feedback on what we can do to help get more folks engaged each Sunday. Is Zoom working for you? IF you haven't tried it please do! Zoom has greatly improved its security and now gets high marks for the service they are providing at this time. Facebook is there for you as well. Did you know that if you want to be a lector or read a children's message you can! All you need to do is let the worship team know and they will find a way to either video record you or pipe you in live via Zoom.

We will have lots more to say about “accessibility” over the course of this new year. If you have any suggestions or questions on how our Church can be more accessible to you please let us know.

Bless you all !

Carol Lundgren and Frank Frazier

“Thanks be to God . . . ”

. . . for the many generous friends and members of the First Congregational Church of Wakefield, UCC. Together our Diaconate, on behalf of our church and the Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund (FDDF), has been able to continue our local mission to church families and Wakefield residents that might be experiencing temporary financial hardships during these difficult times.

A big ‘**thank-you**’ to the **Parish Helpers** for their generous support this calendar year. Their gift of \$1,000 enables the Diaconate to continue the above mission.

A big ‘**thank you**’ to many friends and members of our church that have also contributed to FDDF this calendar year. Through November their gifts total a very generous \$1,833.20.

Total yearly disbursements for 2020 were \$3,090. With everyone's support our church has offered aid to local organizations that help supply food to people facing food insecurities. With your support, a helping hand was also offered to several families in difficult situations this year. Sometimes just a little extra boost can help a family a lot. Important items like electricity, heat, gas, or rent might mean the difference between staying afloat and going under.

The Diaconate is very grateful for your support of this church's local mission, The Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund.

Gail Feddern, Deacon

The Ministry of Leadership Council

Leadership Council is the decision-making body acting on behalf of the congregation between duly called Membership meetings. I like to describe Leadership Council as the “great equalizer of voices” among the ministries. There are 17 members of the Leadership Council consisting of the 5 officers, 11 Ministry coordinators, and 1 Parish Helper representative. Each of the above is charged with attending Leadership Council gatherings where our goal is to work as interdependently as possible for the good of the Church. When we all come together at the same table, each has equal voice. We listen, we consider, and we act.

Our monthly meetings are open, and the opinions of others in attendance are taken into consideration for our decision making.

If anyone would like to have notification and invitation to your Leadership Council's meetings, please contact Margie Galabrun balchlaker@gmail.com

Margie Galabrun, Moderator

A Message from Dr. Tere

Hi. I have arrived! Golly, I wish I could say that in terms of computer literacy and weather forecasting and remembering ALL of your names!! I have some THANK YOUs to say!!! Gabby, my kitty and I were met by 4 men and a woman when we drove into the driveway! How awesome that was!! You'll know them because they're the 5 that are bent over and limping around town! LOL. I like books. Is there anything else to say?! So, a big THANK YOU goes to Paul, Ron, David, George and Donna for helping me get my stuff into the house from an SUV and trailer. Even before I arrived, George and Donna did a massive shoveling job They looked like snowwo/men! And, George even supplied me with a platform from which to present goodies to my birds.....or should I say squirrels?!

There were the people who worked to get me here---the jovial, smart, discerning, wonderful Search Committee of Ryan, Charles, Julie E, Linda M and George. Julie M. put the candidating service together and Max played my videos and even knew how to get me in and out of the service live! Then there is Harriet who worked on getting my office ready and who informed me I only have 8 paper clips and 9 thumbtacks. I suggested she leave the tacks on my chair. She will also be giving me a special tour of the Church!

Julie M has tried to teach me how to email using a new computer (thx to Alan) and new software, gulp! Cindy E. worked with me to choose music. Linda M and Margie stocked my refrigerator with good food and even wine.....shhhh! Sue Lynn snuck me a snack---naughty naughty! It was wonderful to meet Rev. Karen Hagy who stopped by with some treats! I'm now looking for volunteers who like to do laundry, cooking, cleaning and ironing robes! Gabby is a terrible cook! KIDDING!! No, not about Gabby---about volunteers!! She wants to thank Titia for wrestling her cat food from the UPS driver and shooing away all the racoons that tried to get it. She left many black eyes out there!

I'd like to express my gratitude to Rev. Maren Tirabassi. She graciously offered to have me participate in services and gently suggested I take the 27th off. She is an amazing person---like all of you! BTW I watched the service on TV!!! Know that, I am GRATEFUL.

And, THANK YOU to all who participated in the Meet & Greet. Your showing up, sharing a bit about yourselves and laughing at my silliness was fun! The most serious thing I can say is that I was myself during the interviews and meetings---and, you liked me anyway! You all are easy to like. There are always surprises when a new pastor comes to town---for all sides. And, it takes some time to get to know each other, especially at any depth. We've started the process! May God bless us all richly as we seek to serve each other, our community and our wider neighbors---with God's love. Amen.

TO any I've forgotten or not known about, THANK YOU, TOO!!

Dr. Tere

Endowment Fund News

Thanks to **ALL** who contributed to our year-end Endowment Matching Challenge.

Contributions as of Dec 29th totaled \$6,300 + \$5,000 from our matching donor which means **\$11,300** to fund our Endowment — **WOW**. It has been quite the year to kick off our new Endowment — but look how far we have come!

And orders for Memorial Bricks have been rolling in. George snapped some pictures of the first batch of engraved bricks. Our hope is to start placing them along the entry walkway this spring.

Standby as we plan in 2021 to roll out some of the fund-raisers that had to be postponed due to Covid-19!

*Endowment Governance Committee
Judy Trepal & George Ackerman*



Zooming Along

It's everywhere now—from business meetings and school classes, to family holiday gatherings to worship services. Zoom has been very instrumental in keeping people connected during the pandemic over the past 10 months or so. Zoom Worship is a wonderful way for us to worship together where we “see” each other and can speak to each other. And it looks like we'll be continuing in this manner for awhile.

If you are not familiar with Zoom, it is very user-friendly. Julie M., our Congregational Life Administrator, sends out a weekly email invitation prior to the worship service by 8:30 on Sunday mornings. You only have to click on that link to be brought to the Zoom website where you can join the meeting. A Zoom account is not required if you are strictly joining Zoom Meetings as a participant. If someone invites you to their meeting, you can join as a participant without creating an account. It's best if you join with video so we can see your smiling faces! You can access Zoom on any device where you can access the internet. It was wonderful to see over 50 of us at the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.



We are also broadcasting our worship services on Facebook Live. If you are a Facebook user, you only need to go to our church Facebook Page to watch the video live as it's happening. And if you happen to miss it you can go back later and watch (It is not immediately available, but sometime shortly afterward.)

For those who do not have a Facebook account, you can find our Facebook page link on our website www.fccwakefieldnh.org. The home page has a link that will lead you directly to the Facebook page. Look under Social Media Links and click the Facebook logo. When a window pops up and asks you to join or sign in, go to the lower edge of the window and click “Not Now”. Please note that if you do not have a Facebook account, you cannot watch the service live, but you can watch the taped video shortly afterwards at 11 am on Sundays. Hope to see you at our Zoom Worship!

*Carol Jeffery,
Communications Ministry*

Faith Formation

In the new year, we will pick up where we left off with our study of Peter Gomes: *The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart*. (Note: Amazon has the book for 13.99/Kindle version for 7.99).

Our class will restart on Tuesday, January 5th with chapter 6. If you weren't with us in November for the start of this study, it's not too late to join! We're one chapter into the 2nd part of the book which delves into how to view the "hot" topics of today against what the Bible has to say. The first three January classes will focus on:

January 5 - The Bible and Anti-Semitism

January 12 - The Bible and Women: The Conflicts of Inclusion

January 19 - The Bible and Homosexuality: The Last Prejudice

And we will continue every Tuesday going forward with subsequent chapters until we finish the book.

Please contact Julie Kessler (julielouisekessler@gmail.com or 603-871-8066) if you're interested in joining either of these studies. We meet on Tuesdays at 12:00 - and until further notice, we meet via Zoom.

Julie Kessler

New Email Addresses for the Church Office and Pastor

We are switching from Google Gmail to Microsoft Exchange for email services. Initially, this will apply only to:

fccwakefieldnh@gmail.com (church office)
fccwpastor@gmail.com (pastor)

The new email addresses have already been created and you are receiving emails from the new church email address. Our CLA, Julie M., I will be using the new email address to send all church office correspondence. The primary purpose of notification is to be certain that the new emails do not go to your spam folder, and that you will no longer receive emails from the old email addresses. Pastor Tere will start with FCCW using this address: Pastor@fccwakefieldnh.org

The NEW email addresses are
ChurchOffice@fccwakefieldnh.org (church office)
Pastor@fccwakefieldnh.org (pastor)

Please add these to your address book to avoid having your messages go to your SPAM folder.

JANUARY 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2
3 Second Sunday Of Christmas Online Worship and Holy Communion via Zoom 10 a.m.	4 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30	5 Faith Formation Study Via Zoom Noon	6 EPIPHANY Grief Support Group 11 a.m. FUNdraising Meeting Via Zoom 1 p.m. Diaconate Mtg Via Zoom 2 p.m.	7 Community String Band Via Zoom— 6:30 pm	8	9
10 First Sunday after Epiphany Online Worship Via Zoom 10 a.m.	11	12 Faith Formation Study Via Zoom Noon	13 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. Parish Helpers Room	14 Racial Justice Discussion Group via Zoom 4:30 Community String Band Via Zoom— 6:30 pm	15	16
17 Second Sunday after Epiphany Online Worship Via Zoom 10 a.m.	18 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30	19 Faith Formation Study Via Zoom Noon	20 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. Parish Helpers Room	21 Finance Meeting via Zoom—1:30 Community String Band Via Zoom— 6:30 pm	22	23
24 Third Sunday after Epiphany Online Worship Via Zoom 10 a.m.	25	26 Faith Formation Study Via Zoom Noon	27 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. Parish Helpers Room	28 Prayer Shawl Ministry 10 a.m. Community String Band Via Zoom— 6:30 pm	29	30
31 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Virtual Worship 10 a.m. via Zoom						

Celebrations!

Rest in Peace—Marjorie Berg

We are saddened by the passing of our long-time member and friend, Marjorie “Marge” Berg. Marge passed away on December 14. She is remembered as having a great capacity for friendship and a positive outlook on life.



You can find her obituary here —[Obituary](#)

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

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

thank you!

Thank You to many of our Church family friends for providing our sanctuary with the gorgeous poinsettias. The plants created a festive and colorful atmosphere. The beauty and delight of a flower is a gentle reminder of God’s grace and love.

*Blessings, Rachel White
Decorative Arts Ministry*

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 12 Richard & Diana Peckham
- 16 Jeff & Valerie Ward

Birthday/ Anniversary FB Fundraiser



\$235^K BY 235TH

ENRICHING OUR COMMUNITY

If you have a BIRTHDAY or ANNIVERSARY in January it’s your moment to make a difference! Create a Facebook Fundraiser to support our Endowment Fund. It’s easy! Instructions on setting up your Facebook Fundraiser can be found on our website. Follow this link:

<https://www.fccwakefieldnh.org/fundraising/>

FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN



We are a community that believes that prayer is powerful! Please keep in your prayers all those who suffer in any way in mind, body and spirit, as well as those who by virtue of their service are far from home or in harm's way. We ask also your prayers for peace in our world, for the health and integrity of our democ-

racy, and for the flourishing of the work of our community of faith.

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 would like to be a member of the prayer chain, or have a prayer request, please get in touch with Harriet Wilson (dhwilson39@gmail.com)

For more information on articles you read in the Steeple Views, contact the editor at steepleviews@gmail.com or call the church office at 603-522-3189.



www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalChurchofWakefieldUCC

Racial Justice

What is Racial Justice, you might ask. Didn't we already address that with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s? Wasn't that laid to rest with the Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.? What do you mean by "Black Lives Matter" don't All Lives Matter? Jesus would have said, "Yes, all lives do matter". But He did not reach out to all lives. His Disciples were common laborers and fishermen, not rulers or religious leaders who held positions of wealth and power. His followers were tax collectors and prostitutes. These were the marginalized people that Jesus knew needed His teachings, healings, and love. They were the Black Lives Matter people of the first century.

Christ "came that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly", John 10:10. In our society those who are living abundantly are predominately White. Economic resources, education, housing, medical coverage, and many other societal opportunities are not always accessible for people of color (POC). Generations upon generations have left POC out of the collective American pie.

Our Racial Justice Discussion group meets the first Thursday of every month at 4:30 via Zoom (except in January we meet on the 14th). We talk about books, podcasts, music, movies, news articles and any other resources we encounter concerning Racial Justice. We are learning how to become comfortable with being uncomfortable. Questioning our status in society and opening our eyes to the realities faced by POC can be a little uncomfortable. There isn't any guilt or blame tossed around, only awareness and understanding.

People join our monthly meetings when time allows. If you can't make it on the 14th, I will still send you the zoom link and maybe you can make February's meeting. If this interests you, please email me at dvackerman@gmail.com and I'll add you to the group.

Donna V. Ackerman

From the Assistant Treasurer:

With the new year upon us, I will be hard at work generating those year-end donation reports for 2020. You should be receiving your report no later than the end of January. If you have need of it sooner, please let me know and I'll make sure I get it to you as soon as possible. Happy New Year! Julie Kessler

Online Sales: An Ongoing FUNdraiser

To address the question "how do we fundraise during a pandemic?", we started our Online Sales FUNdraiser back in June. The success of this effort amazed even us! To date, we have raised over \$7500 that is being split between the Endowment Fund and the Church's general account. The success has been a group effort spearheaded by Margie Galabrun. It depends on many folks to: prepare items for sale (take pictures, figure out pricing and write up the description), post the item where it will be most apt to sell (Facebook Marketplace, EBay, Craigslist, etc), be prepared to show the item and extremely important, donate the item in the first place!

We would very much like to keep up the momentum and we need your help! First, if you're interested in the sales side of things, just give a call or drop an email to the folks listed below and we will work out the ways you can be helpful in this process.

And second, this is only going to work if we get the items to sell. Maybe you know of someone who is moving and looking to downsize; perhaps you have a piece of furniture in the basement that belongs in a living room but you just don't have room for it; maybe there's an item in your closet that hasn't seen the light of day in over 15 years. Note that seasonal items sell best during the right season. So trying to sell a canoe right now would probably be difficult but we just sold a snowblower in a very short amount of time. If you have something you don't want or need, please get in touch with one of the following people:

Margie Galabrun – balchlaker@gmail.com (603-522-6647)

Julie Kessler - julielouisekessler@gmail.com (603-871-8066)

And do remember when taking inventory to see if you have anything we could sell: one man's junk is another man's treasure!

Julie Kessler

Passing the Plate—2021 Style

Though we are not passing the plate on a Sunday morning these many months, the bills still have to be paid. Thank you to all who faithfully support our church with your pledges and donations. But did you know that you can pay your pledge or make a donation online through PayPal or Debit or Credit Card? This may be especially convenient in the winter months because you can avoid making a trek to the church or the post office!

If you go to our website at fccwakefieldnh.org and click on "Donate", you will be directed to the PayPal site where you can make your donation. You can even set up automatic monthly payments!

Hope Filled Resolutions

New Year's Resolutions, most of us have made them and more than not, most of us have broken them. The more popular resolutions involve some kind of fitness regimen. This makes sense following the somewhat glutinous months of November's Thanksgiving, and December's Christmas. Other attempts at righting a year's worth of wrongs consists of; starting a diet, quit smoking, watch less TV (especially the news, which may not be a bad thing). One of my childhood resolutions involved not fighting as much with my brother. But his ability to get under my skin made it difficult to achieve.

The history of making a resolution is said to date back 4,000 years with the ancient Babylonians. Their calendar began in March when they planted their crops. There were several days of festivities where the people pledged their loyalty to the king or crowned a new king. They made promises to their gods and pledged to pay off their debts. I can see where failure to fulfill their promise to multiple gods would encourage one to make sure they did not default on their pledge. In 46 B.C. under the reign of Julius Caesar the calendar was changed so that the new year began in January which was so named after the Roman god Janus. He was a two-faced god said to symbolically look to the past and ahead to the future. The Romans made sacrifices to Janus and promised to make good choices for the coming year.

In 1641 a Scottish writer, Anne Halkett made a multiple paged diary post listing improved behavior for the new year and titled them "Resolutions". In 1740, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, created the Covenant Renewal Service, also known as the watch night service, which was held on New Year's Eve where they sang hymns and prayed. Today's New Year's Resolutions are more secular in nature. We make promises to ourselves, and not necessarily to God. Unfortunately, only about 40% of Americans make resolutions with about 8% actually keeping them.

As we say farewell to 2020, some may include the words "good riddance". Yes, there were many hardships and losses in the past year, but there were also babies born, dresses delivered to girls in Zimbabwe, young adults graduated or entered college, new family traditions were established. Virtual gatherings (though not as rewarding as actual gatherings) allowed family and friends to see each other on Zoom or other social mediums that otherwise may not have occurred. We were blessed with having Dr. Tere Kruger answer the call to be our pastor.

We look now to the hope of 2021. We patiently await our turn to receive a vaccination that will rid our country and the world of the Coronavirus. We hope for social justice, for economic recovery, for the protection of our environment so we may pass on to the next generation a healthier planet.

I want to share with you my personal resolution, which is to "Pause". I hope to pause before I speak so that my words will be a blessing to others and myself. I hope to pause before I negatively react to news that might bring anxiety, and instead allow myself to breath so that peace may reign supreme. I hope to pause and dwell in the serenity of God's beautiful earth, enjoying the sights and smells and sounds of nature. Notice that I use the word "hope" and not "will". I hope to do these things and therefore I hope to fulfill my resolution to "Pause".

May your resolutions, if you make any, be achievable. May they be a blessing to you and others. May 2021 be all we hope it to be. Happy New Year and God Bless

Donna V Ackerman

Our Building & Grounds Ministry Request

Although only a few people are using, or have need to use the church during this time, Building and Grounds has a couple reminders. If you turn on lights as you make your way around the building, please turn them off when you leave. If you had to turn up the heat in a zone, please remember to drop it back down to 55 degrees before you go.

The final item of concern is a request, that the interior doors (our 2 million dollar doors), which are our fire doors, never be locked. Over the past week or so, I have found the fire door at the bottom of the stairs leading into the fellowship hall locked on several occasions. Please, do not make this a habit. God forbid there was actually a fire and a person without a master key needed to escape that way. During this pandemic, as we try to use different entrances and not overlap with the nursery school, locking that door forces a person to enter the fellowship hall by going through the nursery school area. Thank you for your cooperation.

George Ackerman

Finance Ministry

I would like to thank the many friends and members of FCCW for their continued generosity with their pledges and Alternate Gifts this year. Once again, I am amazed at the contributions, not only to support our budget, but also to the Feddern Diaconate Fund, Zimbabwe, the Endowment, the Food Pantry, and the various programs of the UCC. Simply Amazing!!

Are you curious about the inner workings of our church? Our monthly meetings are open to anyone. The next one will be on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 1:30 via ZOOM. If you would like to join us, Julie Kessler can send you an invite. Just let her know and she'll add you to the list. We try to keep them to 1 ½ hours, but sometimes it can go over. And, sometimes, they are shorter! New faces and new ideas are always welcome. Currently, the Finance Ministry is made up of Janice Brejwo, Harriet Wilson, Mary Bernier, Julie Kessler-Assistant Treasurer, Pat Anderson, Co-Treasurer, and Nancy Dee, Co-Treasurer.

Nancy Dee, Co-Treasurer

Christmas in Zimbabwe

Christmas in Zimbabwe is an eye opener. I learned that having chicken on Christmas Day is a sign that it IS Christmas. Having sliced bread and margarine to serve with tea (and plenty of it for visitors) is expected. For Christmas dinner chicken and chips (french fries) is a treat. Something other than sadza or rice, although both will be served, is preferable. The children at Daisy Dube orphanage were able to have chicken, spaghetti, french fries, rice, and coleslaw along with bottled soft drinks. This was a very, very big deal. One of the older girls sent me photos of their full plates and a note of thanks on behalf of all for making their Christmas so special.

Imagine. They had food we could eat on any given day and they were so deeply grateful.

I learned that children having a new shirt or a new dress or any new item of clothing to wear means it is Christmas. One loveable neighborhood kid was wearing the same dirty, threadbare clothing day in and day out... for weeks. I found a pretty nice t shirt and some nice jeans along with a pair of new underwear from the container and gave it to him a week before Christmas. He was THRILLED but the next day he was back with the old, tired, needing-a- wash clothing. On Christmas day he was sporting his new duds, proud as could be and giving out big hugs.

I saw Christmas through the three boys who live with me, ages 8, 18 and 21. All were amazed to have a Christmas stockings to hang. Their joy at finding presents in the stockings and presents under a small artificial tree the next morning was amazing. For all three it was their very first time to receive Christmas presents. They didn't want to rip off the paper. They shouted and clapped their hands in delight over each and every gift opened by themselves or by another.

Imagine your 18 or 21 year old feeling *so very blessed and special* to get an Old Navy t-shirt, a sweater, a bandana, some candy canes and a \$10 bill.

It is rainy season in Zimbabwe. It was pouring on Christmas Day, rivers were flooding, and certain roads and bridges were covered with fast, powerful water making traveling very treacherous. We managed to make it to remote Humani Village and saw even the poorest of children who live in mud huts sporting their new clothes with HUGE, happy grins on their faces. Didn't matter that it was raining, they were running about, singing and dancing with their friends for it was Christmas.

People walk about and visit one another, hence the need for the extra tea and the extravagance of store bought bread with a dab of margarine. People say, "Christmas Box!" to one another, meaning they expect some kind of a Christmas treat or a small gift. It could be a coin, \$1 or a piece of candy or an article of clothing... anything, really. I didn't come to Humani Village prepared to respond to "Christmas Box." I did bring bags of groceries (cooking oil, sugar, flour, peanut butter, cabbages, potatoes and some treats) for some seven previously designated families with assorted articles of clothing to pass out amongst the neediest of kids. We left extra clothing with a well known friend, Laina. When someone said, "Christmas Box!" the refrain was "Go and see Laina, we left something for you." (I had to stop our team when we far, far exceeded the number of

referrals to what had been left with dear Laina. Let's hope she is still talking to us next visit.)

On the way home, we had to cross a flooded bridge. At the start of rainy season a few weeks earlier a National Parks Ranger had lost his life when his vehicle was swept away. This was a narrow, single lane concrete bridge without guard rails of any kind. It was very dark and our team wondered if we should cross or stay the night in the vehicle, especially as the water was rising before our eyes and huge tree limbs were getting jammed in the middle and blocking the way. Sam (age 21) and Blessing (age 18) paused a moment and then heroically walked to the middle of the rushing water to release the jammed trees. The water was above their knees and rising to mid thigh. They stood arm and arm with long sticks to show us the edges of the bridge. We all cheered when our vehicle made it to the other side and the boys were jumping in the air with enthusiastic fists pumps. I had tears as I told them how proud I was of their bravery yet how worried I was to see them on the bridge, unprotected. They responded, "But Connie, we were protected. We stopped to pray before we stepped into the water. We were not afraid."

"And the children shall lead them..." Let us stop to pray and walk on unafraid.

Peace and blessings for the New Year.
Love to all,
Connie



Christmas At Daisy Dube

Congregational Presidents

This month we transition to a new presidential administration. The following presidents were members of the Congregational church:

- ◇ John Adams – 2nd President (raised Congregationalist but became Unitarian)
- ◇ John Quincy Adams – 6th President
- ◇ Calvin Coolidge – 30th President
- ◇ Hubert Humphrey – 31st President
- ◇ Barack Obama was our 44th President and a member of the UCC.

Linda Petkunas, Church Historian



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