

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

VILLAGE SPIRE

September 2017



All Church Rally Day September 10

Church School Begins

Church School begins on Sunday, September 10. Church School is being structured differently, Pre-K through grade 4 will meet on Sundays. There will be Christian Formation instruction for grades 5-7 in the form of a Middle High Youth Group. Both the Sunday Church School and the Middle High Youth Group, MHYG, are adopting the theme of "Grounded in God's Love: Your Opportunity to Serve." *Spark* curriculum is in use for Pre-K through grade 4 children, while the MHYG will be implementing "Just Eating" embraced by the UCC. These programs are online and can be located on the church's website under Christian Formation. Registration for both is online only at the church website, Christian Formation, Church School; hence, please register your child/children to keep all information up to date, for our children's safety. I am looking forward to a vibrant Sunday Church School and Middle High Youth Group, as well as to a prospering population with great enthusiasm.



Any concerns or questions please contact Marilyn Gibson, Church School Coordinator at mgibson@ccamherst.org or 673-3231 ext 20.

September At a Glance

10:00 a.m. Worship Services
Resume September 3

Chancel Choir Rehearsals
Resume September 7

Church School
Resumes September 10

All Church Rally Day Picnic
September 10

WA Regular Workshops
Resume September 11

Creative Worship Service
September 17

Senior High Youth
Meets September 17

All Church Rally Day Picnic

Join us as we celebrate the beginning of a new church and Sunday school program year! Following the 10:00 a.m. worship service, head outdoors beside the church to enjoy good food, music and games.

We'd appreciate food contributions: If your last name begins A-N, please bring a side or salad; O-Z, a dessert. Hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks will be provided. All ages are invited to the festivities—renew friendships and make new ones! \$5/person; \$20/family.

Contact Roger Hooper at rhooper673@aol.com if you can help with set up, cooking or clean up. RSVPs are

helpful—email Roger, contact Andrea in the church office, or speak with any member of the Fellowship Committee.



VILLAGE SPIRE

A Parish Newsletter
Editor, Andrea Cyr

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

Sunday Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Church school and nursery care available.

How to reach us:
Office Phone (603) 673-3231
www.ccamherst.org
[Facebook.com/ccamherst](https://www.facebook.com/ccamherst)

The church office
is open Monday–Friday,
from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Send in all news by the
15th of the month.

Announcements
for the Sunday bulletins
are due Thursdays.

OUR CHURCH STAFF:

Richard G. Leavitt
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revlev@ccamherst.org

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Handbell Choir Director
wendyvaleri@tds.net

Marilyn Gibson,
Church School Coordinator
mgibson@ccamherst.org



What is Small Group Ministry?

Small Group Ministry is where 8-10 people meet in a committed group with the intention of establishing deeper connections with each other and with God.

The groups meet once a month from October to June, and are led by trained lay members of the congregation.

The group meetings run 1.5 hours and include a check-in, a short topic reading, discussion of the topic, and closing prayer.

We have 4 groups that meet at a variety of times/days to allow members to pick a group that best fits their schedule.

Benefits of Small Groups

Allows for deeper conversations that we can't always have in committee meetings or during coffee hour.

Provides a relaxing and safe place to explore and ask questions about issues of faith and life.

Facilitates the building of friendships and creates an atmosphere of mutual encouragement, support, and prayer.

Participants feel a greater connection to one another and to God, and are FIVE TIMES less likely to drift away from church.

All of our groups follow a common curriculum provided by Pastor Maureen. This year our focus theme is the Christian Calendar Year.

Topics for 2017-2018

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| October: | Rally Day: Starting Anew |
| November: | Advent: Waiting in the Dark |
| December: | Christmas: God With Us |
| January: | Epiphany: Revelations |
| February: | Ash Wednesday: Mortality |
| March: | Lent: Letting Go |
| April: | Easter: Healing & Hope |
| May: | Pentecost: Future Dreams |
| June: | Ordinary Time: Go and Do |

Choose a Group!

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| Tuesday | 1:30–3:00 p.m. |
| Wednesday | 7:00-8:30 p.m. |
| Sunday | 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. |
| Sunday | 7:00-8:30 p.m.* |

*Sunday p.m. group meets in Bedford.

All other groups meet in the church parlor or the third floor youth room

How To Get Involved

You may join a group at any time of the year as long as your choice is still open. Each group is limited to 10 members.

Sign up online at ccamherst.org or fill out a registration form in the church office. You may also sign up by contacting Pastor Maureen at 603-673-3231 x14 or pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

See You in September

The Reverend Richard G. Leavitt, Senior Pastor
September 2017

Summer is great—a little slower, a little break from routine, sometimes a special trip or an outing in the good weather. But by September, I'm missing my church family. Rally Day always comes for me with a sigh at the intensity of the new church year restarting, but also with great expectation and new energy for the good things happening here in this place and the people I have missed. We are a dynamic and vital congregation—with cool people who are faith filled, dedicated, talented and good friends. Without everyone back from “away,” we're not quite as able to be and do what God wants us to do and be about.

In this newsletter, you will find the first seeds of an exciting program year in the life of our congregation. There are new initiatives in Christian Education and Formation, a novel and fun idea for Time and Talent sharing, a new Adult Education series, Small Group Ministry groups forming again with a fresh focus. And a host of other activities in outreach and service, music and worship, fellowship and formation, that are meaningful and fun. One particular exciting idea we are developing is a change in the third Sunday of the month, from “Family Worship” to “Creative Worship.” After a helpful summer hiatus and time for feedback from a number of folks, we have decided to continue some of the emphasis around creative worship but not try to also make it a family worship. This made the services a little too long for our youngest members and a little too encompassing to meet everyone's need. The youngest children will return to a pull-out group activity after their initial time in worship, similar to what they do on regular church school Sundays. But we will continue to explore some more informal, interactive, and creative elements with that service the way we did before. The first Creative Worship Sunday will be on September 17 at the regular 10:00 a.m. time, with a theme focused on “Blessed and Blessing.”

So, I hope you've had a good summer, that you are feeling refreshed and rested (even if a little weary from all the coming and going). And I look forward to seeing you all in September, as together we celebrate, grow, and serve God in this place.

Grace and peace,

Dick



On Sunday,
September 17
we are inviting
all children and
youth (and adults!)

to bring their school backpacks to church for a special Back-to-School blessing during morning worship. Our pastors will offer a blessing for all the students and teachers, and the children will receive a special item to keep in their backpacks as a reminder of the blessing throughout the year.

Woman's Association's Monday Meetings Resume

The weekly Monday Morning Workshops of the Woman's Association will resume on September 11, beginning at 10:00 in the church vestry. Those who can stay past noon should bring their own lunch. Coffee, tea and dessert are always provided.

The Workshops are informal meetings where members and friends of the WA gather to prepare for the upcoming Fall Rummage Sale and Holiday Fair, or to just enjoy the fellowship of the group.

All church and community women are welcome to attend on any Monday. Anyone with questions about the Woman's Association or the Workshop can contact Adrienne Topliffe at 673-7436 or abtopliffe@comcast.net.

SHARE Food Pantry

The SHARE Food Pantry continues to be busy. Please know your donations are needed and truly appreciated.



September
Pantry Requests:
canned ham, side
dishes (seasoned
pasta mix, Hamburger
Helper, etc.), ravioli
and beef-a-roni

Donations may be left in the cupboard in the narthex, or in the marked containers near the community room. Thank you for your continuous support!

Community Supper Needs Volunteers

Our next commitment at SHARE in Milford will be on Tuesday, September 5 for a spaghetti supper, serving from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Your help is needed with table set up, greeting, kitchen help, serving, clean up and dessert making. This is a great opportunity to serve your community.

If you can help, please contact Bob Miskelly at robertmiskelly@comcast.net or 554-8789; or Bob Gibson at 672-7244 or gibson@myfairpoint.net.

Christmas in Amherst Village House Tour

Have you heard the buzz? We are definitely having a house tour this year!! Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Five village homeowners have graciously offered to open their homes for the day and it is our fortune to be able to act as their liaisons and docents. But this doesn't happen without your help! Here are some of the ways you can donate your time on the day of the tour: 3 hours as a docent in one of the homes, shuttle van driver, ticket sales, etc. We still have openings on the committee (which meets once a month from now until December): designer and florist coordinator, gift basket creator (for the homeowners), etc.

If you are interested in joining our team or have questions about the tour, please contact Sally Hooper: 603-321-1143 or sallyhoop@comcast.net.



Kick Off the New Year with SHYG!

We'll have our first Senior High Youth Group gathering at the Rally Day Picnic after worship on September 10! Stop by for food and to catch up with old and new friends! Our first official SHYG meeting of the year will be on Sunday, September 17 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. We'll welcome our new members, play games, and start planning all the fun things YOU want to do this year! Hope to see you all on Rally Day Sunday!

Rummage Wanted!

Woman's Association's
Fall Rummage Sale

Friday, September 29, 4—7 p.m.
Saturday, September 30, 9 a.m.—noon
\$5 a bag on Saturday



Women's and men's clothing; coats, jackets, children's clothes, jackets, snowsuits & hats.

Jewelry, toys, games, puzzles, gently used books.
Linens, table cloths, mats, towels, clean bedding, curtains, etc.
Dishes, glassware, kitchen utensils, pots & pans.
Vintage items, antiques & collectibles, holiday decorations.
Household items, home decor, unused gifts!

Please leave your clean, sorted, and labeled bags of clothes, or cartons of household items in the vestry WA storage rooms.

Call 673-3231 for church hours.

Sorry, but we cannot accept large furniture, baby furniture or car seats, exercise equipment, text books

FISH Volunteers Needed

FISH volunteers help local residents by driving them to and from medical appointments when no other transportation is available. FISH needs additional drivers to provide one or two rides a month. All rides are local—most to Milford or Nashua. FISH also needs telephone volunteers to work from home for one or two hours twice a month to match ride requests with drivers on the driver list.

Please consider becoming a FISH volunteer. Call 673-7372 and leave your name and telephone number; someone will call you back with more information or to answer your questions.

Join other FISH volunteers who help continue this essential ride service.



animate BIBLE

Fall Adult Ed Series
Begins Wednesday, September 20
10:00-11:30 a.m. in the Parlor

Encounter Scripture in a New Way!

The ANIMATE adult education series by SparkHouse is an exciting new way to learn and grow in faith outside of Sunday morning worship. The series uses short videos and engaging questions to inspire conversation about our Christian faith, practices, and sacred stories. In September, we'll begin the series with "Animate: Bible." The curriculum is designed to reinvigorate and deepen understanding of the Bible for participants as they develop a fresh, nuanced, and positive relationship with the sacred texts. The videos feature creative animation and presentations by contemporary pastors, writers, and theologians, and the material is accessible to all - whether you've been reading the Bible all your life or are picking it up for the first time.

Participants are also welcome to purchase a companion journal for \$8 that provides space to reflect, sketch, doodle, and ponder the material for each session and serves as a wonderful keepsake for the journey. Contact Pastor Maureen at pastormaureen@ccamherst.org if you're interested in purchasing a journal.

Animate: Bible – Series Schedule

- September 20: "Canon" – How did we get the Bible we have today?
- October 4: "History" – Oral stories to iPhones: Language and accessibility matters.
- October 18: "Testaments" – What do we do with the God of the Old Testament?
- November 1: "Gospels" – Why do we have four different versions of Jesus' story?
- November 15: "Genre" – The Bible is not one book but a collection of many!
- December 6: "Interpretation" – How context, history, and intention affect understanding.
- December 20: "Grace" – How can we love a book that is the cause of so much pain?



From Your Congregational Care Team

Charlie Glover, Cynthia Glover,
Sally Hooper, Carol Lyon, Sara Phelps,
Jean Tonnesen, Chris Trudo
Pastor Dick Leavitt and
Pastor Maureen Frescott

We hope you had a wonderful summer! As you may or may not know, our Congregational Care Team is always busy "behind the scenes" helping with meals, transportation, visits and phone calls. We respond to issues and concerns that are brought to our attention within our congregation. There is a continuous need throughout the year and people are extremely thankful for the assistance.

I am asking for those of you who would like to be on our calling list to PLEASE email me with your contact information at kalben1@comcast.net. Cell phone numbers, as well as home phones, are very helpful. Even if you think we already have your information will you please send it to me anyway? There is no need to tell me your schedule and availability, we will simply have a way to reach you. If you are unable to help at that time we will continue to call others.

Thank you!

Questions? Please email or call me at (603) 759-6468.

Peace,
Sara Phelps

Privacy Laws & Hospitalization

Due to privacy law church is no longer routinely informed if your loved one is admitted to the hospital. Please be sure you let us know and where you will be patient so we can be in touch with you and include you in our prayers.



Construction of the Second Meetinghouse

Anne Krantz, Historian

The May 21 finale of our wonderful year-long 275th celebration of our church's humble founding on September 22, 1741, included a second hour program featuring NH architectural historian James Garvin, who spoke about our present second meetinghouse finished in 1774. Steve Fifield, whose construction company repaired the building sills and roof frame, and rebuilt the steeple in 1999 - 2000, explained this extensive structural restoration.

It is hard to believe that just 20 years after the fourteen families who settled Souhegan West, had grown to 110 resident taxpayers by 1760. Census records show that the booming town had grown to 858 in 1767, to 1,370 in 1773, and by 1775 there were 1,428 people. They had outgrown its first meeting house at Flanders corners. [http://www.nh.searchroots.com/documents/Hillsborough/History_Amherst_NH.txt]

While still a British colony, Amherst voted in 1770 to build an enormous second meetinghouse on the common. The Reverend Daniel Wilkins (1711 – 1784), who wrote and signed the 1741 founding covenant, was still the minister, not being retired until 1775. What a thrill it must have been for him to preach the first sermon on January 19, 1774 in this largest meetinghouse in the region!

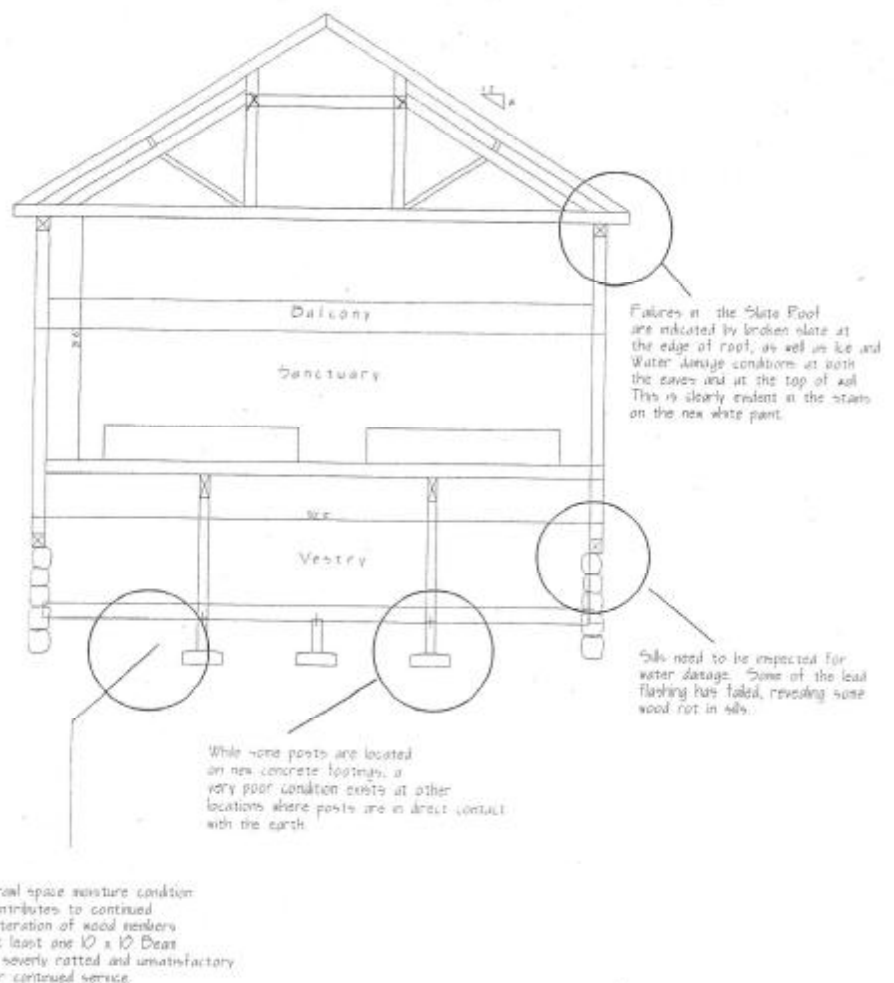
Once Amherst was selected as the shire town for Hillsborough County in 1769, the town anticipated the need for this huge meetinghouse. The young families who settled frontier towns like Amherst were producing lots children who attended services with their parents, filling their pew boxes. Also, what are now neighboring towns, Milford (withdrew in 1782) and Mont Vernon (withdrew in 1781) and the village of Monson, disbanded in 1770, all attended the Amherst church.

On "Oct 4 1770, the town voted to build a meeting-house for public worship 75 feet long and 45 feet wide." Also "to raise 150 pounds lawful money, to defray the expense of building said house." On October 25, they voted to reduce the dimensions to 70 feet x 40 feet, but added a steeple at one end and a porch at the other end. [Secomb, pg. 237] (Somehow these dimensions were altered and our meetinghouse is 50 feet wide and 75 feet long not including the 14 foot square steeple). The original structure on the common was about 42 feet tall to the ridge pole, but raised 8 feet when it was moved to its present location. Now it is 50 feet to the ridge pole, resulting in symmetrical and pleasing proportions on the gable end: 50'tall x 50'wide, with a 100' steeple.

The town voted to proceed with the project, after due discussion on October 4, 1770. But more discussion and legal maneuvering followed at several town meetings, where on March 11, 1771 a proposition was made "to reconsider the vote already passed for setting said house on the plain." Legal shenanigans are nothing new! This proposal was rejected along with others to stop or alter the building project and the building committee proceeded. [Secomb pg. 239]

Post and beam construction permitted huge open interior spaces with no interior supports. The six roof trusses and the two gable ends hold up the eight 50 foot long ceiling tie beams that connect to the side plates. This construction was only possible because virgin timber was still to be found. Virgin white pine was much denser than pine lumber of today because it grew slowly in the shady forests. These huge straight timbers were used for the critical load bearing posts and beams, as well as for the hundreds of additional timbers required.

The first task of our church deacon and master builder Ephraim Baker was to locate in the surrounding forests the timbers for the long plates and sills: four seventy-five foot long, by 18 inch square, straight timbers. Transporting these monster logs, weighing tons, from the forest to the site was done in



the winter when the ground was icy and oxen and dragging sleds could be used. Nevertheless it seems impossible.

Unbelievably, the timbers were hewn, the trusses prefabricated and the frame was ready to be raised by August 26, 1771. So the wood was still fairly green and heavy. Beams 12 inches square were used and a single beam could weigh over a ton at 50-60 pounds per cubic foot! Furthermore, all this weight balances precariously on the four corner posts. All the framing was held together with mortise and tenon joints and wooden pegs. Great skill was required to make the mortises, the rectangular holes or pockets that receive the tenon, as these naturally weaken the beams. How did they ever raise the frame, and how did they ever get the six tie beams that connected the two side frames at the ceiling level lifted in place, not to mention jack up the six roof trusses which could weigh 10,000 pounds each?

The tower is constructed of four 13 inches square posts, fifty feet tall and over a ton each. Having the tall tower posts at one end probably was helpful in hauling up beams, but no records remain, and exact techniques are unknown. [Reference: *Colonial Meeting-Houses in New Hampshire*, Eva A. Speare, pgs. 25 – 29.]

There was a virtual building boom of huge meetinghouses in our region: the Jaffrey building of 1775 is similar in size and design to ours, with a steeple 'porch' at one end the way our's originally was built in 1774. The Jaffrey meetinghouse has an elaborate clock and bell tower but a much shorter steeple. It is said that the workers could hear the guns of the Revolution as they hurriedly finished the tower and steeple.

For an interesting comparison of area meetinghouses, read Mr. Garvin's REPORT ON THE GROTON TOWN HOUSE GROTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE https://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/publications/documents/groton_townhouse.pdf.

Groton church – forty-two by fifty-three feet

The meeting house in Amherst, built in 1771, measured forty by seventy feet. The meeting house of 1773 in Wilton Center measured forty-five by sixty feet. Both were considered unusually large for rural meeting houses of their period.

The meeting house in Hampstead (1749) measures forty by fifty feet,
that in Danville (1755) measures thirty-seven by forty-nine feet,
that in Sandown (1770) measures forty-four by fifty feet,
that in Jaffrey Center (1775) measures sixty by sixty-five feet,
that in Washington (1789) measures forty-five by sixty feet,
that in Lempster (1794) measures forty by fifty feet,
and that in Fremont (1799) measures thirty-seven by forty-seven feet.

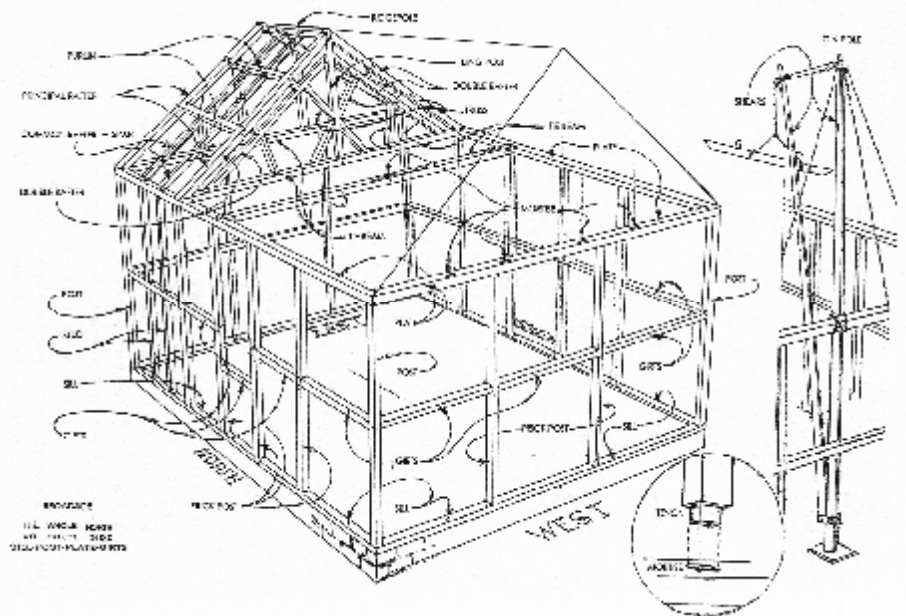


FIGURE 12. The parts of a meetinghouse frame. Drawing by John W. Blanch.



Celebrate Our Heritage

The Congregational Church
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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