

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

VILLAGE SPIRE

November 2017



Charlotte Bell's Ordination November 5, 2017



Mark your calendars! On Sunday, November 5, the Congregational Church of Amherst will proudly host Charlotte Bell's Ordination Service, beginning at 3:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Following the service, we invite everyone to join us in the community room for a celebration of Charlotte's journey and her ordination in the United Church of Christ as a minister, and in recognizing all the preparation, dedication, devotion and sacrifice that Charlotte has endured to follow her call to serve.

Congratulations Charlotte!

Levi Saturday November 4

The Trustees of the Facility will hold our annual Levi Saturday fall clean up on November 4 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Join with other church members for fellowship, comradery and a feeling of pride in sprucing up the church building and outside grounds. John Swanson will lead our efforts and publish a list of tasks to be completed so you can select your own project and come prepared with the appropriate tools.

animate BIBLE

First and Third Wednesdays
10:00-11:30 a.m. in the parlor

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. The videos feature creative animation and presentations by contemporary pastors, writers and theologians, and the material is accessible for all levels. Participants will receive a companion journal (\$8 suggested donation) that provides space to reflect, doodle and ponder the material for each session. If you can't make the sessions you may join in the conversation on our church Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ccamherst.

Here are our November session dates and topics:

November 1 – "Gospels: Unexpected Good News"

We know the four Gospels tell the story of Jesus. But why do they tell different stories? Why does Matthew say one thing and John something else? What does it mean to say that the Gospels are "good news?" Nadia Bolz-Weber peels away our assumptions about the Gospels and reminds us that Jesus didn't come to make us feel comfortable, but rather to upend our ideas about what "good news" really looks like.

November 15 – "Genre: Rhythm of the Text"

Poetry, history, songs, letters, prophecies, even dreams—this is the stuff the Bible is made of. So why do we struggle to make sense of the various genres of biblical literature? Jose Morales suggests there's more to understanding genre than just knowing the difference between a psalm and an epistle. We have to know how to dance with all the rhythms we find in this sacred nightclub.

Growing Our Gifts

Growing Our Gifts, our fall fundraiser, has brought out the creativity of members who have offered homemade food items (pies, jam, hot fudge, cider); handmade scarves, necklaces and mittens; and services ranging from a harvest dinner to a Reiki class to handyman services to babysitting. The fundraiser will continue through November.

To find out what products and services are still available, check the updated list on the Growing Our Gifts bulletin board or on the church website. Watch the weekly church bulletin and the News from the Pews email for new opportunities. It's not too late to sign up to offer something yourself. Contact Kay Steeves kksteeves@gmail.com or 249-5792 if you have any questions.



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:

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Marilyn Gibson
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Church School

The church school is healthy due to our extremely talented, compassionate and self-sacrificing teachers. The teachers of late are Alison Batey, Maureen Minner, Sue Werst, Larissa Riley and Leona Hendrickson. We have been blessed with recent assistants Meredith Dart, Shannon Gascoyne and Jessica Bortolotto, while other parents have sat in with their child and offered assistance.

The winter term is fast approaching, beginning on Sunday, December 3, while the spring term begins on March 11. Please consider teaching or assisting in a classroom. You can find the schedule on the church website, under Christian Formation and Church School.

All the while, we are living out our church school theme, "God helps us to help others," exploring Bible stories, such as "Noah's Ark," "God Calls Samuel," and "David is Chosen."

The children continue to support missions by donating to emergency relief efforts through the UCC, as well as to Heifer International, and by participating in "Read to Feed" that ends on November 26. You can support the Read to feed mission by signing up to sponsor a child, at our table in the community room during fellowship.



Small Groups Bring Us Closer Together and Closer to God!

This year our Small Group Ministry program is following the seasonal themes of the Christian calendar.

In November, our theme is "Advent: Waiting in the Dark." The season of Advent is a time we spend 'intentionally' anticipating the birth of Jesus - the coming of the light and life that Christ brings into our world. While the world outside the church hurtles towards Christmas at full speed and festive lights shine all around us, we in the church use the time to sit patiently in the darkness, lighting one candle at a time. How do we handle periods of darkness in our lives? Do we feel pressured to seek a false happiness, hope, and light when we're not feeling it? Where do we find God in the darkness?

November Meeting Schedule:

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| First Tuesday Group | 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. | November 7 |
| Sunday Group | 11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. | November 19 |

Upcoming Group Discussion Topics:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 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 |

If you're interested in joining one of our groups please contact Pastor Maureen at 673-3231 x14 - pastormaureen@ccamherst.org.

Me, Too!

Rev. Richard G. Leavitt,
November 2017

A couple of weeks ago the news broke about yet another high profile sexual predator, this time in Hollywood. It seems billionaire film producer Harvey Weinstein has a decades-long history of being a serial abuser of women. Dreams of rising to fame and fortune often led young wannabe starlets, assistants and other ambitious women through the private hotel room or shower stall of Weinstein against their wills. He joins the ranks of several other high profile harassers—Bill Cosby, Roger Ailes, Bill O’Riley, Bret Favre and Anthony Wiener among them, who were also recently exposed for their abusive behavior. It’s clear from even this short list that this isn’t a politically conservative or liberal issue. Nor is it only prevalent in certain professions or in particular socio-economic circles. We know sexual abuse has been spotlighted in the church, in the medical profession, in politics and in sports. It’s everywhere. It’s just that those high up on the food chain have the farthest to fall once they’re exposed. “Don’t tell anyone, or I’ll ruin you.” “No one will believe you!” “I’ll tell everyone you came on to me.” “You’ll never work in this industry again.”

Some have characterized the media and gawking readers as prurient in their interest in these things. It’s not fundamentally about the sex or the come on, however. It’s about power and coercion and silence. What many do not understand is that the use of sexual intimidation, rape and other forms of violence to dominate women is far less about the sex than it is about power and conquest and control. Yes, aggressive sexualized behavior may be the vehicle used to exploit; it may lead to the desired humiliation and degradation that is the essence of misogyny. It may give the abuser great satisfaction that he got away with something. But the insidiousness of it comes from the desire for submission of the victim and the perpetrator’s own personal pleasure at another’s expense.

I’m not a huge Facebook user. But I have an account. Maybe some of you noticed as I did the number of women who responded to the invitation to post their own simple testimony for all to see. “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote ‘Me, too!’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem. Please copy/paste.” One after another, my female friends, relatives and colleagues began posting “Me, Too!” on their Facebook pages, a courageous and bold act of solidarity which echoed virally across the internet among their many exploited sisters and the men who care about them. I spoke with several of my friends privately about the pain of their own stories. Their tales were disturbing and heartbreaking! Several had never shared their painful experiences before. Although the “Me, Too!” initiative began as a women’s movement, sexual harassment is not just a “female issue.” I saw the posts of several men among those who had been raped or groped or threatened with unwanted sexual overtures. But sadly, it is most widespread among women and girls in particular. This is not an insignificant problem in our midst. It is simply a quiet one—because the shame experienced by victims and the unsympathetic reaction from many in the wider community keeps people from speaking up. Victims are often isolated, blamed and made to feel responsible for their own behavior that led to their abuse instead of holding the perpetrators responsible for their heinous actions.

No, sexual harassment and abuse is not an isolated practice. It is far more widespread than any of us would like to acknowledge. And it will only change if we’re willing to expose it to the light. It is my hope that encouraging women to speak up and speak out will give them back a bit of the power that they lost when they were victimized. It will make men far less comfortable with thinking they can get away with this exploitation. And it will remove some of the conquest caché that makes sexual violence something to chuckle about in the locker room. To all of my sisters who have been harassed (and my brothers, as well), I offer you my support and encouragement to tell your stories. You will have my shoulder and my compassion, my attention and my advocacy on your behalf. May God heal your pain and restore healthy self-confidence wherever it has been eroded by harassment or abuse. And may the shining of the light bring new attitudes to the workplace so no one will have to suffer in the darkness ever again.

Grace and peace,

Dick



On behalf of the congregation, your diaconate is planning to deliver Thanksgiving food baskets to families in our community who need a little help. We want to help them by providing the ingredients necessary to prepare a complete, wholesome Thanksgiving dinner. We are asking the congregation to help us by providing non-perishable foods for these Thanksgiving Food Baskets. We are asking for canned vegetables, jarred apple sauce, egg noodles, fruit juice, instant mashed potatoes, jarred turkey gravy, quick bread mixes and stuffing mix.

Please bring these food items between Sunday, November 5 and Wednesday, November 15, and place them in the collection container located at the front door or near the community room. Any extra food will either be saved for our next community supper or donated to SHARE. Thank you very much for your generosity.



Veteran's Day Display

Our church has a very rich and patriotic history. When we talk with our veterans, we realize how much we have contributed to that history.

Veteran's Day is November 11 and this year we would like to recognize the day by displaying all the varied military hats (enlisted, warrant officer and officer) of those who served. Hats will be on display in the church narthex on Sunday, November 12.

Anyone who would like to participate in this display, please contact John Swanson at swanjohnny@comcast.net.

Have a SUCCESSful Holiday!

As you gear up for the holidays, why not use gift cards from SUCCESS to help? For the turkey and trimmings, you can purchase a Shaw's card. Need a Christmas tree? Get a card from Lowe's or Home Depot. Making some gifts? Get cards to use at Michael's, Joann's or AC Moore. Are there people on your list who are hard to buy for? How about a restaurant gift card for Longhorn, Uno's, Chili's, Olive Garden, Legal Seafood, or any of many other options? Need a gift for teachers, babysitters, etc? There are small denomination cards available for Panera, Dunkin Donuts, Subway, Starbucks, Arby's, and many more.

Stop by the SUCCESS table during coffee hour. We'll be there on November 19 and other Sundays by chance. Thank you for your support!



Celebrate the Season of Giving

The Christmas season is just around the corner and soon the World Service team will be receiving the names of individuals and families who will be depending on the community for help. There are many ways for you to help!

Through SHARE, we usually provide Christmas gifts for approximately 40 individuals and families. The 'wish list' for each of our SHARE families will include two "needs" and two "wants" for each child under the age of 18 as well as a request for a family gift (for example: movie tickets, board games, restaurant gift certificate, etc.). Our SHARE donation sign-ups this year will be either for a child or a family gift. You can of course choose more than one person!

Crestwood Center, a skilled nursing facility in Milford, will again provide us names of residents and items they are interested in receiving for the holidays.

For the third year we will again participate in Bethany Christian Services' *Operation Christmas Joy* drive, which provides gift cards to meet the Christmas wish lists of children in foster care statewide. You can use our *SUCCESS* program to purchase the gift cards and help out two causes! BCS is an organization that helps children and families in crisis find adoptive and foster families, short-term-crisis care, and so much more.

Whether you can provide for an individual child, teen, senior or a whole family, there is a way for everyone to participate. Sign ups for gift giving will be on Sundays, November 5, 12 and 19, and all gifts are due back to the church no later than Tuesday, December 5. We hope you will join in the fun of this popular holiday season celebration of sharing. For more information, please contact Carolyn Mitchell carolynvmitchell@gmail.com or Dave Chen david.h.chen@comcast.net.



Two Great Events in December

Your Fundraising Committee has been hard at work for a few months planning this year's Christmas in Amherst Village house tour, otherwise known as CAV! We have carefully selected five wonderful village homes which will be available for you to view on Saturday, December 16 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Each home will be decorated for the holidays and each tells a different story, some going back over 200 years! Tickets will be on sale by November 1, so please keep an eye open for the announcement.

For the children, we will again be hosting Breakfast with Santa which is to take place on Saturday, December 9. Breakfast will be served, there will be organized games and crafts for the children, and best of all they will be able to meet Mr. and Mrs. Claus! Admission is by tickets which will go on sale during November.



Congregational Church Holiday Fair Returns on November 18

The annual Woman's Association Holiday Fair on Saturday, November 18, promises to be the biggest and best yet, offering shoppers unique merchandise for Christmas gifts and decorating.

The lower level of the church will be transformed into a series of charming Christmas boutiques filled with food, gifts and decorations. Holiday items will include our exquisite and exclusive handmade birchbark house ornaments and decorations. Our supply is limited so come early!

Our fresh, long-lasting Maine balsam wreaths are hand-decorated with various Christmas themes, as well as holiday table arrangements, and unique holiday decorations. Attractive raffle baskets will each have a theme: Thanksgiving Basket, Breakfast Basket, Chocolate Basket, Beer Basket and Wine Basket.

Our freshly cut Vermont Cabot cheddar cheese is always a hit, as well as our popular one-pound bags of South Carolina *huge* pecan halves - recipes will be available. The bakery will be loaded with fresh baked pies, cakes, breads, cookies and other treats just in time for the Thanksgiving holiday. Our always popular booths include the Treasures Tables, featuring a huge assortment of choice and vintage china, glass, special linens, household décor, holiday decorations and lots of wonderful jewelry. The gift table will offer home décor with a birch bark theme along with hand-crafted gift items

The knits table will feature a wide assortment of soft warm hats and beautiful baby knits along with scarves and sweaters. Also, all-new American Girl doll clothes with lots of Polartec coats and hats, sleepwear, dresses and sportswear.

The huge Silent Auction will offer a wonderful assortment of unusual items, featuring the fabulous handmade Tom Brady Bunch Blanket, a lighted Tom Brady figurine, a fabulous hand-carved hummingbird model, framed art, Amherst memorabilia, a nice acoustic guitar, two hand-painted side tables, small antique white rocker, antique copper molds, pots & pans, a beautiful antique quilt in courthouse steps pattern, designer handbags, collectors nutcrackers – one is a Red Sox figure, rare little league child's Red Sox shirt, and much more!!! Bidding will close at 1:00. (Go to the church website for photos.)

We'll also have RADA stainless steel cutlery, including the best-selling tomato, steak and paring knives for sale. They're made in USA.

Complimentary coffee and mini-muffins will be available before lunch. A delicious homemade soup lunch will be served from 11:30 to 12:30 for \$5, for an enjoyable shopping break and chance to chat with friends.

The proceeds from the fair enable the Woman's Association to make a generous annual gift to the church and to support other church programs and community charities.

Questions? Contact the church office at info@ccamherst.org or 673-3231.

Holiday Fair - Help Wanted!!

Bakery Needs - Plan ahead to make your favorite pies, cakes, cookies, candies and special treats. Church members will be contacted for donations, or contact Anita Swanson: 673-7612, or neetoswanson@comcast.net.

HELP - Wreath decorators are needed at the WA workshop on Monday, November 13 at 9:30 a.m., and floral arrangements will be assembled on Tuesday, November 14 at 9:30 a.m.

Table set-up on will be Thursday afternoon, November 16 at 1:00 p.m. – A BIG JOB! Fair sales help is needed starting at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 18. ***Fair clean-up help needed Saturday at 2:00 p.m.!!!!***

Call Adrienne Topliffe with questions: 673-7436.

Woman's Association's Christmas Luncheon and Program

Monday, December 4
at 10:00 a.m.



Save the date and plan to join us for our festive Christmas program followed our always delicious potluck luncheon.

Nancy Baker is developing an entirely new program for us! All are invited to *A Mind of Winter*. In a four season climate winter asks us to shift our mindset, to develop a new spiritual and emotional relationship between the hearth and the landscape. This program will explore the ways we adapt to a season of natural dormancy through art, poetry and folktale.



Andover-Newton Seminary Moving to Yale

Anne Krantz, Historian

This past summer I was startled to read in the August 11 issue of *The Wall Street Journal*, "Andover-Newton Theological School, the nation's first graduate school of any kind, founded in 1807 outside Boston, sold its campus in July and is moving to the Yale Divinity School campus in Connecticut." Another national story that relates to our own church history. Many of our ministers graduated from Andover-Newton with a 3-year Masters of Divinity degree, from Nathan Lord in 1817, to our present ministers, Pastor Dick in 1979 and Pastor Maureen in May 2011; and recently, Charlotte Bell who graduated in May 2014. Before the Andover graduate program, prospective ministers like our first two who were Harvard graduates, Daniel Wilkins 1736 and Jeremiah Bernard 1773, needed only a degree from a respected college like Harvard or Yale. These Colonial colleges were founded to prepare ministers, along with other professions.



The Reverend Nathan Lord, our third minister, graduated from Andover in 1817, just 10 years after it was founded. A strict Calvinist, he stood strong against the nationally developing Unitarian movement that was also brewing at Harvard. From my March 2016 *Spire* article about Lord: In 1822 the Amherst Unitarians unsuccessfully applied to the selectmen for the use of the town owned meetinghouse for a Sunday to engage Rev. Henry Ware of Cambridge, MA, who was the leader of the Unitarian movement at Harvard. Upon Ware's arrival for the speaking engagement, Rev. Lord presented him with a letter that denied him access to the meetinghouse and his pulpit. Ware spoke at the courthouse the following day.

Lord's voice failed, so Rev. Bernard was hired to serve as co-minister with Lord. This resulted in the curious situation of a Harvard minister working alongside an Andover minister, reflecting the divergent religious theologies of the two seminaries. Barnard "was styled an Arminian in his religious belief...In his church all shades of belief were tolerated, and all had the opportunity, by the system of ministerial exchanges then practiced, to occasionally hear their own peculiar views expounded and enforced." *Secomp* pg 282

Pastor Dick kindly shared his perspective on this upsetting historic change:

I am saddened by the sale of the Andover Newton campus which has served to educate and nurture pastors and religious leaders in that location for over one hundred years. Andover Newton has always been highly respected not just for its academic rigor, but also for its stellar formation of parish ministers. As the churches change in a changing society, so too must the seminaries. That reality must be recognized. I know there will be new initiatives and a new direction for education as the seminary moves to the Yale Divinity School campus, but it will never again be quite the same institution. As with any transition, there are mixed blessings as we say good bye to the respected, the tried and true institutions and ways of the past. Yet also new hope and possibility as we look ahead to an exciting future and how we can continue to serve God's people and more faithfully witness to the love of Jesus Christ.

My father is an alumnus (Master of Divinity, 1953; Doctor of Ministry, 1982) and I too am an alumnus (M. Div. 1979). I have known Andover Newton in that location from my earliest days. Andover Seminary (Congregational) merged with Newton Theological School (American Baptist) many years ago early in the new 20th century, and Andover moved to the Newton location, so this kind of "merger" has happened before. I'm sure the folks in Andover grieved that move even as we grieve this one. The church and seminaries will survive, but what they will look like going forward is still being revealed. I certainly understand the financial drain that a prime property like that Newton campus can create. Institutions of every kind, especially theological schools not directly linked to prestigious secular institutions, no longer command the same support and loyalty that they once did.

Some folks have mistakenly said that Andover Newton Theological School is closing. Seminary officials assure us it isn't closing, it is transitioning. It will have a new location and a much more streamlined faculty and educational program at the Yale Divinity Campus, but it will retain its separate identity. The new name of that institution has already been incorporated. It will be Andover Newton Seminary at Yale. Besides any emotional attachment alums may have for their school, the most difficult thing for churches in the greater Boston area will be the loss of that theological hub in our immediate vicinity. Many of our congregations and local pastors served as teaching parishes and supervisors, and helped train the next generation of pastors. We all received continuing education and cutting edge theological training with Andover Newton nearby. And ANTS was part of the Boston Theological Institute, allowing cross registration and collaboration with the other 7 seminaries in the greater Boston area. We were able to recommend a full program of seminary education to Members-in-Discernment in our parishes because they could commute from their home churches either part time or full time and not have to leave their jobs, their homes, or their families to prepare for authorized ministry. With the new Andover Newton located at the Yale campus in New Haven, CT, this will no longer be possible.

I hope for a new and exciting future for my alma mater. What it will become going forward is still being revealed. This I know, that God will guide the future of the church as God has in the past.

What's UP with SHYG?

What's UP with the Senior High Youth Group this Fall?

We have 35 active teens in our group this year who gather at the church on Sunday evenings three times a month for discussion, sanctuary time, fun, games, and outreach activities.

SHYG had a very busy month of October, gathering on the first Sunday to pack Care Packages full of goodies to be sent off to SHYG alumni who are now freshmen and sophomores in college. This year we sent off 20 packages! Also on that Sunday, we collected and packed Hygiene Kits for Church World Services' hurricane and disaster relief efforts. During October, our teens participated in our congregation's Growing Our Gifts fall fundraiser by making and selling apple cider! They attended and took orders at the "Gifts Marketplace" after church on October 1 and gathered on October 15 to make 22 quarts of cider. Thank you to Cindy and Mark Boynton for donating the use of their apple press, and to Anne Krantz for donating her apples! On October 22, the teens held a FREE Pancake Breakfast before worship to say "Thank You" to the congregation for supporting the SHYG mission trip to Kentucky last June. Also on that Sunday, we had several of our teens and chaperones share stories from the mission trip during our Mission Sunday Worship service. This fall, several of our teens have been helping out with our Church School program by serving as assistants in the classroom. And on October 29, the teens carved and decorated pumpkins to be displayed on our church steps for the Amherst Village Halloween celebration.

Grounded in God's love, serving our neighbors near and far, welcoming to all.


Our Senior High Youth are the living embodiment of our church's mission statement.

What's UP with SHYG?

Ask us! We'd LOVE to tell you more!

Come celebrate the holiday season!

Our Annual Christmas Concert



Congregational Church of Amherst
Sunday, December 10
at 3:00PM in our Sanctuary

Chancel Choir ~ Handbell Choir
Youth Choir

Sara Phelps ~ Director of Music
Michael Havay ~ Organist/Accompanist
Wendy Valeri ~ Handbell Choir Director
Linda True Stromski ~ Guest Flutist

Prepared to Serve

The New Hampshire Conference is looking for leaders who might be willing to offer a workshop at the annual *Prepared to Serve* leadership training event in Pembroke on February 24, 2018. Past attendees have specified a desire for more workshops on music, youth ministry, elder ministry, church growth and church branding/marketing. If you have church and ministry skills you're willing to share (in one of these areas or in some other area), please speak with either Pastor Dick or Pastor Maureen. The deadline for proposing workshops is usually in early December.



The Congregational Church
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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NOVEMBER

MAILING LABEL HERE

Let us come before his presence
with thanksgiving,
and make a joyful noise unto him
with psalms.

For the Lord is a
great God
and a great King
above all gods.

Psalm 95:2-3

