

VILLAGE SPIRE

January 2018



Come One! Come All!



To an evening of food, fellowship,
fun, and fabulous entertainment!

The Annual Spaghetti Dinner & Variety Show

Saturday, January 27 at 6:00 p.m.
in the community room

If you have an act or a talent that
you'd like to share in the variety show,
we would love to hear from you!
Adults, youth, and children of all ages
are welcome to participate!

Contact Pastor Maureen
at 673-3232, ext. 14 or
pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

All proceeds benefit our
Senior High Youth Group's
2018 Mission Trip to MIAMI,
where we will be working with DOOR,
serving inner city communities and
families in need.

A Capital Idea

Congregational Meeting January 21, 2018
Capital Campaign Feasibility Study and Fire Suppression Repairs

A Special Congregational Meeting is being called to ask the congregation to approve going forward with a Capital Campaign Feasibility Study and to discuss and ask approval to address the church's failing fire suppression system.

Nothing Lasts Forever and that includes the church's aging fire suppression system. As with every other mechanical system, a fire suppression sprinkler system has finite life expectancy. Rust, wear and age all take their toll on otherwise simple, innocuous systems like this. Over the last few years our church's sprinkler system has been showing more and more signs that it has reached or exceeded its useful life. Our system is 27 years old. There have been three pipe bursts / leaks that have resulted in water damage to floors, walls and ceilings, as well as expensive pipe replacements. These leaks have also worn out one air compressor and are currently heavily taxing its replacement.

Background: A fire suppression sprinkler system is fairly simple by design. It consists of steel pipes connected to a controlled water source and a compressed air source. Along the run of pipes are heat/fire sensitive release valves that make up the sprinkler heads. The system is normally void of water and is pressurized with compressed air. The compressed air is the signaling medium for applying water when a fire occurs. When a heat /fire sensitive release valve opens up due to excessive heat or fire, the sharp drop in air pressure is sensed by the water control valve, which opens up and quickly fills the pipes with water. Water is sprayed out of the open fire sprinkler to extinguish the fire/flames. Our system works in this manner.

Continued on page 5

The Light of the World

The Rev. Richard G. Leavitt, Senior Pastor
January 2018

After Christmas is put away, after the cookie crumbs are swept up and the wrapping paper is discarded, after family and friends have left and the ornaments are back in their boxes till next December, it's tempting to crave business as usual and a little respite from our holiday hectic. While the frenzy of feasting may be over in many households, the spirit of Christmas does not end once the calendar flips to a new year. January 6 is the day of Epiphany (we'll celebrate it in church on January 7), and the succeeding weeks until Lent represent the Season of Epiphany. If you follow the rhythm of the liturgical year, this is when Jesus begins to grow into maturity. While it's not celebrated widely in this country, many Europeans have all kinds of festivals, feasts and recipes associated with Epiphany. Yes, you can continue baking (and eating!) delicious treats even into January!

Continued on page 3



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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Wendy Valeri
Handbell Choir Director
wendyvaleri@tds.net

Marilyn Gibson,
Church School Coordinator
[mgibson@ccamherst.org](mailto:m gibson@ccamherst.org)

New England's Colonial Meetinghouses and Their Impact on American Society

Presented by artistic photographer Paul Wainwright

Sunday, January 28 at 4:00 pm
in the Sanctuary of the Amherst Colonial Meetinghouse
(Snow date February 11)

Sponsored by the Congregational Church of Amherst
with support from NH Humanities to Go.

FREE program - public invited

Refreshments will be provided at the book signing following the program.

New England's colonial meetinghouses embody an important yet little-known chapter in American history. Built mostly with tax money, they served as both places of worship and places for town meetings, and were the centers of life in colonial New England communities. Using photographs of the few surviving "mint condition" meetinghouses as illustrations, Paul Wainwright tells the story of the society that built and used them and of the lasting impact they have had on American culture.

Artistic photography and a love of history have been longstanding interests of Paul Wainwright, but he became interested in physics in high school and eventually wound up getting a PhD in the field from Yale. Wainwright worked for many years at Bell Labs, with photography being a continuing avocation. Since 2001 he has pursued his love of photography full-time, and is especially drawn to photographing historic structures in very personal and introspective ways.

He creates his photos in a traditional manner utilizing sheet film, a large-format camera, and silver gelatin printing. He develops his films the old-fashioned way to achieve a sense of quiet contemplation that comes from the slow process of creating his images.

Wainwright's work is included in the permanent collections of public, private and corporate collectors, including the Boston Public Library, the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover.

Wainwright's first published photography book, *A Space for Faith: The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England*, was released in early 2010. The historic architecture of early meetinghouses is featured in his elegant black and white large-format photographs that capture the beauty and history of the few remaining historically pure Colonial Meetinghouses in New England.

WA Fair Critique and Lunch

January 8, 10:00 a.m. in the vestry

The Woman's Association will begin the new year on Monday, January 8 with our annual Fair Critique followed by our famous Stone Soup.

We begin with Adrienne's detailed report of the fair results. We already know that overall it was a huge success thanks to the hard work of the WA members and the many church volunteers who pitched in to help in so many ways. This is the one time we analyze the fair table by table and make suggestions and recommendations for next year.

We welcome all who helped with the fair to join the discussion, and then enjoy a bowl of hot soup. Anyone who would like to bring either an ingredient for the soup or other item for the lunch should contact Carol Lyon at 672-0100.





Winter/Spring Adult Ed Series
Begins Wednesday, January 17
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. In January, we'll continue the series with "Animate: Faith." The curriculum is designed to reinvigorate and deepen understanding of the central topics of our Christian tradition. The videos feature creative animation and presentations by contemporary pastors, writers, and theologians, and the material is accessible to all.

Animate: Faith – Series Schedule

January 17	"God" – Who exactly is the God we worship?
February 7	"Religion" – Is being "spiritual" the same as being "religious?"
February 21	"Jesus" – What does it mean to walk in the way of Jesus?
March 7	"Salvation" – What does it mean to be "saved?" From what?
March 21	"Cross" – What is the meaning behind Jesus' death on the cross?
April 4	"Bible" – Is the Bible still relevant in our time?
April 18	"Church" – How is church like an imperfect family?

Growing Our Gifts Wrap-up

Thanks to all who participated in the fall Growing Our Gifts fundraiser! We had participants who were creative and offered a variety of products and services and, just as important, buyers who supported the project with their purchases. With most of the proceeds in, the project has netted almost \$1100 for the church.

A Gift of Life



We are working with the American Red Cross (ARC) to schedule a church hosted Blood Drive on Friday, March 2 from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. For planning purposes to confirm this date, the ARC has asked that we establish a preliminary list of volunteer helpers and donors. If you would like to donate and/or help coordinate this drive please contact Roger Hooper (rhooper673@aol.com) or Andrea in the church office

The Light of the World, continued from page 1

Epiphany means revelation or enlightenment. It's the 12th day of Christmas (of musical fame) and represents the traditional arrival of the kings to Bethlehem. What's so significant about those kings who showed up late to the birthday party, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? They represent the first non-Jews to worship the newborn king, and thus symbolize Christianity as a world religion—good news for *all* people. This may not seem especially radical to those of us who have grown up Christian in the 20th and 21st centuries, but for the early church it was revolutionary. Jesus is "the light to the Gentiles" (non-Jews) as well as the king of the Jews. Christians all over believe he is the savior of the world.

The symbolism of the guiding star and Jesus as the light of the world has rich and appropriate significance for the darkest, coldest days of the year (at least for those of us who live in the Northern hemisphere!). Light helps us see clearly the truth of our lives and the way to fulfillment with God. It warms us in its glowing. Light is what we need not only in our own lives but for those upon the world stage as well. En-lighten-ment has extra meaning in these dark days. It means we receive the light and incorporate it into whatever darkness we would otherwise be facing.

Mystics and philosophers and people of faith the world over seek enlightenment through all kinds of study, ritual, and spiritual experience. I would argue that enlightenment is a by-product of our quest, and not a commodity we can acquire or an honor we can earn like some advanced degree or certificate of merit. But we do have the ability to be *open* to revelation. In fact, as faithful followers of Jesus the newborn king, we have a responsibility to seek the light of the world in order to share that revelation with all people. It's our calling as Christians.

As you think about making your New Year's resolutions, I encourage you to make your own spiritual enlightenment a genuine priority. How you define success and happiness may change, but it will make all the difference for you and for our world. New Year's blessings to each and all of you!

Grace and peace,

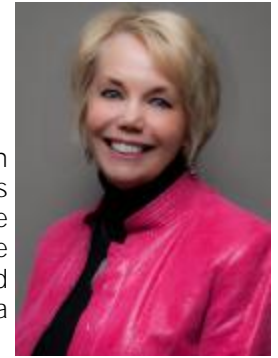
Dick

SOS Special Opportunities to Serve

- Church school assistants are needed, contact Marilyn Gibson (mgibson@ccamherst.org, 673-3231, ext 20)
- January 7: Volunteers to take down the Chrismon tree. Contact Doug Topliffe (dtopliff@rcn.com, 673-7436)
- January 27: SHYG Variety Show & Spaghetti Supper: we need members of the congregation to participate in the show! Contact Pastor Maureen (673-3231 ext 14, pastormaureen@ccamherst.org)
- January 28: Bakers to provide cookies for the New England Colonial Meetinghouses presentation. Contact Anne Krantz (annekrantz@comcast.net, 673-9684)
- February 10: Game night volunteers and participants! Contact Roger Hooper (rhooper673@aol.com 673-7032)
- March 2: Give a gift of life. We will host an American Red Cross (ARC) Blood Drive on Friday, March 2 from 12:00 - 5:00 pm. The ARC would like a preliminary list of volunteer helpers and donors. Contact Roger Hooper (rhooper673@aol.com, 673-7032) or Andrea in the church office if you would like to help.

“Feeling the Grace”

An Interview with Susan Bagnara Thornton
By Sue Spiess



When Susan Bagnara Thornton walked into the church almost 40 years ago, she “felt the grace.” She felt like this is where she belonged. It was where she wanted her three children to go to Sunday School, which they did. What she didn’t know was that two of her children would be married here. She also didn’t know that she would become a trustee for two terms and the Moderator today.

There was a time when she wasn’t an active member, but one day Glen Whitehouse, as Moderator, asked her to be a trustee. Flattered, she considered the offer. Her dad had always been a trustee, so she knew what the commitment was; she is a business woman, and thought she could use that experience to help the church return to a sound financial position; she also believed that she could identify others’ strengths and could recruit them to do what they do best.

As a trustee, she helped get the parsonage rented, hired a cleaning service for the church building, and recruited others to join new efforts. The popular house tour was continued, the car raffle was successful, and the Long Range Planning Committee was formed. All this was possible, Susan says, because people were asked to help and said “yes.”

As Moderator, Susan has overseen many changes, including the bylaw revision, near elimination of the debt, a new financial cycle, and the church reorganization. Work has begun on the capital campaign. The challenge now is to find new people whom the present leaders can mentor, so progress can continue.

Her greatest joy? “Getting to know so many people with so many different talents and watching them grow” and care for this church. While the church has gone through many changes and challenges, when she walks into the church, Susan can still “feel the grace...and the presence of generations of people through hundreds of years” who have cared for the building and nurtured the church community. She brings her two grandchildren to church, where they see a whole community who cares for them and loves them. She sees a church that welcomes newcomers and continues in the spirit that she found here almost 40 years ago.

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!



A Few Words About the Weather...

Church Closings Due to Bad Weather:

As we all know, New England weather is ever changing and at times quite unpredictable. In case of bad weather and the need to cancel a worship service, we will do our best to get the word out. Tune in to WMUR Channel 9 television, WZID 95.7 FM radio, WMLL 96.5 FM radio, or WFEA 1370 AM radio to check for a cancellation notice. We will also leave a recorded message on the church answering system (673-3231), and will post a notice on our website and our Facebook page.

Beware of Falling Snow and Ice:

It is that time of year again when we must remind everyone that snow and ice may fall from our roof at any time. Please use caution when in our driveway, and do not walk too close to the building.



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 January, our theme is "Epiphany: Revelations." The season of Epiphany begins on January 6 - the day the Magi, the visitors from the East, arrive bearing gifts for the Christ child. This is the day that Jesus is revealed to be the long expected savior – not just of the Jewish people – but of the world. The word "epiphany" means "revelation" – a revealing of a truth that was not previously known. What truth about God – or from God - do you wish would be revealed? As we enter a new calendar year, what it is that you hope will be revealed for you in the months ahead?

January Meeting Schedule:

First Tuesday Group	1:30 – 3:00 p.m.	January 2
Sunday Group	11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.	January 14

Upcoming Group Discussion Topics:

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.



Church School

The Christmas pageant of December 17th was greatly anticipated and warmly received. Its format was one which allowed many participants to play characters from the Christmas Story that they may never have had the pleasure to do before. Thank you to everyone who took a part, character, narrator, leader, director, backstage prop organizer, ministers, choir, choir director, organist, deacons, secretary, and more.

The church school needs to fill teacher vacancies with adults who are eager to help nurture our children's spiritual growth. Please consider teaching grades 1 and 2 on January 14th, January 28th, and or February 11th. (All materials necessary are provided.) Please e mail mgibson@ccamherst.org, or call 673-3231 x20 to contact Marilyn Gibson.

A Capital Idea,

continued from page 1

The Problem we are experiencing is that the pipes in the system are rusting and are experiencing pinhole air leaks. These leaks make the air compressor run to keep pressure up in the system. As the pinhole leaks become larger and pipe walls become weaker from rust, the compressor cannot keep up to compensate for the air leaks, and the water control valve turns on as if a sprinkler head has opened up in response to heat/ fire. Water sprays out of these pinholes in the pipe and water damage ensues. This has happened 3 times in the last 20 months.

What to Do: On January 21 of the new year, a special congregational meeting will be called to decide how to address this problem. Repair options, along with how to pay for this potentially significant expenditure, will be presented and recommendations will be discussed. A Capital Campaign is expected to be the ultimate source of funding for these repairs, but the urgency of the work is way out in front of this campaign. This Capital Campaign is intended to address the many issues identified with the church and parsonage, with this fire suppression system being but the first on the list. A Capital Campaign Exploratory Committee has been working since last summer and is now ready to present its initial findings and recommendations to the congregation. These recommendations will be presented at this congregational meeting and will include a request to go forward with the first step of a Capital Campaign, a professionally run feasibility study.

More information will be provided on the Capital Campaign and the fire suppression sprinkler system as we get closer to the 21st, but in the mean time should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to talk with Dick Stout, Jack Buben or John Swanson of the Trustees of the Facility, or Susan Thornton, Will Redway, Todd Whitney, or Doug Topliffe of the Capital Campaign Exploratory Committee.

The Congregational Church
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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**New England's Colonial Meetinghouses
and their Impact on American Society**

presented by photographer

Paul Wainwright

Sunday, January 28, 4:00 PM

In the sanctuary of the 1774 Amherst Meetinghouse - now the

Amherst Congregational Church, 11 Church St., Amherst, NH

Free - supported by NH Humanities

