

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

VILLAGE SPIRE

January 2019



Spaghetti Supper & Variety Show



Come One! Come All!

Saturday, January 26 at 6:00 p.m.
in the community room

This year's Annual Spaghetti Dinner & Variety show is your chance to let your God-given gifts SHINE!!

Join us for an evening of food, fellowship, and fabulous entertainment—hosted by the SHYG, with performances by YOU! Singers, musicians, dancers, comedians, jugglers, magicians, yoyo-ers, karate choppers, pie-eaters, hula-hoopers, lip-sync-ers, even especially skillful nose-whistlers— whatever YOUR special skill is, come show your stuff! Adults, youth, and children of all ages are welcome to participate.

If you have an act or a talent that you'd like to share in the variety show, please email Pastor Kate at pastorkate@ccamherst.org, or talk to me in person any Sunday morning!

All proceeds benefit our Senior High Youth Group's 2019 mission trip to New Orleans, where we will be working with Camp Hope, building houses and serving communities and families in need.

This is one event you DON'T WANT TO MISS!!

“Hunting For Hope”

Maureen Frescott, Acting Senior Pastor
January 2019

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers - That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words - And never stops - at all.
- Emily Dickinson*

A new year has dawned. Some of us awoke on New Year's Day with a new resolution to keep, a new challenge to take on, a new promise made to ourselves, a new outlook on life, a new sense of hope that THIS year will be different from the last. If you're not prone to embracing the “newness” of this new calendar year, or the hope that it supposedly brings with it, you're not alone. As a pastor, the one question I've been asked more than any other, especially in recent years, is this: How do we find HOPE – in the midst of loss or illness; when there is so much suffering around us; in our current political climate; when our world is such a mess; when things seem so hope-less? Living in the age of information saturation isn't helping. Even those who lean towards the more optimistic end of the spectrum are struggling to compensate for the stream of hope-reducing images, sound-bites, and stories that flow out of our news outlets and newsfeeds. What response do we have as people of faith when we feel overwhelmed by the world around us - and we find fewer and fewer flashes of hope to grasp onto?

We just spent an entire season wash in the images, music, and story of our Savior, our one great Hope – Jesus Christ - being born into a world in great need of his presence. But after the decorations come down and the Christmas spirit fades what good does this hopeful story do us if we cannot connect it to our everyday lives?

Continued on page 3

Our Time, Our Turn... Our Progress Continues!

On the financial front...

It has been four months since our capital campaign was officially launched. With the guidance of Peter Heinrichs and Susan Lewis of Full Harvest Fundraising, the hard work by our campaign committee, and the support of the congregation, we have raised almost \$520,000. We continue to receive pledges and donations from our members, and hope to reach our internal goal of \$600,000 soon.

The \$20,000 Bean Foundation and the \$5,000 Woman's Association gifts were the first grants to be received. This past month, with the help and support of the Amherst Community Foundation, we announced our community campaign. Neighbors and local organizations have responded with enthusiasm. As owners of the steeple, the town will be donating \$7,400 toward the fire suppression project. The Historical Society of Amherst has endorsed our efforts to maintain the historic meetinghouse and parsonage. Efforts to reach out to more individuals and organizations continue. Barbara Williams and her committee are researching opportunities for grants from preservation-minded organizations.

Continued on page 4

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.
July & August Worship 9:00 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:

Maureen R. Frescott
Acting Senior Pastor
pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

Katherine Rogers
Acting Associate Pastor
pastorkate@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@ccamherst.org

Sara L. Phelps
Director of Music
kalben1@comcast.net

Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Wendy Valeri
Handbell Choir Director
wendylazott@tds.net

Marilyn Gibson
Church School Coordinator
mgibson@ccamherst.org

HOPE: A Pessimist's Guide NEW Adult Ed Series Begins Wednesday, January 16

Daytime: 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Evening: 7:00-8:30 p.m.
At Home: Any Time!

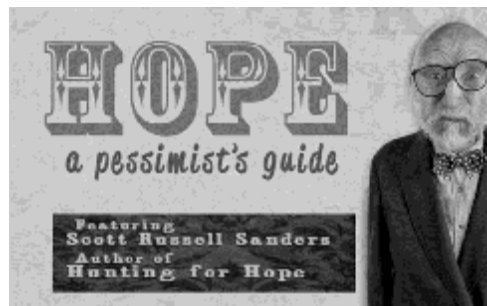
HOPE?? WHY BOTHER?? Is there reason to hold onto hope in a world that often feels hopeless? The answer is a resounding YES! We'll explore the HOW'S and WHY'S of holding onto hope in this challenging and inspiring eight-part series produced by Darkwood Brew – an online faith community. Noted author and UCC pastor, Dr. Eric Elnes, is joined by Scott Russell Sanders, author of the book *Hunting for Hope*, and other notable progressive Christian voices like Phyllis Tickle and Michael Piazza. In addition to offering ways to find hope in the teachings of our Christian faith, the series draws inspiration from unconventional sources of hope, including nature, culture, community, relationships, and simplicity. The series challenges us to see HOPE as a viable force in our world, and explores ways we might harness its energy for a better future.

Each session will feature a 20-30 minute video followed by discussion. Participants are welcome to read Sander's book *Hunting for Hope* as a companion to the series but it's not required.

Attend either our MORNING or EVENING session, every first and third Wednesday of the month. The video content will also be available to view ONLINE for those who can't be with us in person.

Series Schedule

- Wed, Jan. 16 – "What is HOPE?"
- Wed, Feb. 6 – "Hope in WILDNESS"
- Wed, Feb. 20 – "Hope in BODY"
- Wed, Mar. 6 – "Hope in FIDELITY"
- Wed, Mar. 20 – "Hope in JUSTICE"
- Wed, April 3 – "Hope in SIMPLICITY"
- Wed, April 17 – "Hope in BEAUTY"
- Wed, May 1 - "Hope in SPIRIT"



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.

Hunting for Hope, continued from page 1

If we're unable to see the hope found in Christ in the world around us, then perhaps what we need is a shift in perspective. A change in our search criteria. An intentional immersion in hope inducing images, stories, and experiences to counteract the flow coming in the other direction. Not to paint a false picture or overlay a rose-colored lens that distorts our view of the world as it really is, but to make us aware of how distorted our view can become when we look away from the light and focus on the dark. We tend to overlook how much good there is in the world – how much kindness, compassion, love, and grace flows in and around us in our daily interactions, in our communities, and in far-flung places of the globe – even in the midst of suffering and sadness. God is at work all around us. If we're overly focused on the hurting, we may miss the healing.

If you're interested in taking on a new challenge in this new year, we're beginning a new Adult Education series in January called, "Hope: A Pessimist's Guide." This eight-part DVD-based series explores the themes found in Scott Russell Sanders's book, *Hunting for Hope: A Father's Journeys*. Sanders is an American novelist and essayist, whose writing often focuses on the despairing state of the world. After an angry confrontation with his teenaged son on a hiking trip, in which his son accused him of draining all the hope out of life, Sanders realized that his own despair had darkened his son's world. In *Hunting for Hope* he sets out to gather his own reasons for facing the future with hope, finding powers of healing in nature, in culture, in community, in spirit, and within himself.

While you're welcome to read Sanders's book, and I suggest that we do so together as a congregation, no reading is required to participate in the class. The DVD alone invites discussion as each session features interviews with noted contemporary thinkers and theologians exploring the subject of hope, with some real-world suggestions on how to embrace a faith-based sense of hope in our daily lives. The series will be offered in both daytime and evening sessions, to accommodate busy and varied schedules, and will also be available for viewing online for those who can't be with us in person. Participants will have only one homework assignment after each session – to look for, note, and share a moment of hope that they experienced themselves or encountered in the world that week. One point of light shared amongst many others has a way of shifting our focus onto things previously unseen in the midst of darkness.

What this "Hunt for Hope" doesn't deny is the existence of darkness. As Sanders writes, "No understanding of hope can be honest unless it reckons with the absence of hope, the dark night of the soul when nothing comforts and nothing reassures." In our reading and in our group discussions we'll wrestle with some of the issues of today and how we might find God in the midst of it – in the dark and in the light.

What is faith if not a tool – a method – a practice - to shift our way of thinking and being away from what is despairing and hurting towards what is whole and healing? What is faith without hope?

Are you up for a challenge in this new year? Join us as we embark on a Hunt for Hope.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



Small Groups Bring Us Closer Together and Closer to God!

Our theme this year is The Lord's Prayer – the familiar words which encompass so much of our human experience and our relationship with God.

In January, our focus verse and theme is "Thy Will Be Done: Discernment." In the UCC, we use the phrase "God is still speaking" because we believe God's will is made known to us in many ways, beyond traditional interpretations of scripture. When we talk about God's will, what do we mean? How do we distinguish God's will from our own will? How do we make space in our lives to hear and listen to God? How do we as a church determine what God wills for us when we each hear and interpret God's will so differently?

January Meeting Schedule:

First Tuesday Group,
January 8, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Sunday Group,
January 13, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Upcoming Group Discussion Topics:

- February: Give Us This Day:
Trust & Certainty
- March: Forgive Us Our Debts:
Guilt & Shame
- April: As We Forgive:
Neighbors & Enemies
- May: Into Temptation:
Addictions & Distractions
- June: Deliverance From Evil:
Dark Forces

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

Our Time, Our Turn,

continued from page 1

On the construction front:

Our first and most critical upgrade is complete! The fire suppression system is installed and working. Replacing the failed black iron piping system with new, thicker galvanized pipes meant reworking many openings and spaces. Charlie Vars oversaw the six-month process, and credits Don Johnson, the Hampshire Fire foreman, for the success of the installation.

So what's next??

At an upcoming January meeting (exact date TBD), co-chairs Doug Topliffe and Susan Holden and other campaign committee members will be looking forward to discussions with the congregation about the next project(s) to be tackled. Projects will only be undertaken when funds are in hand (and the pledge period is three years), but thanks to the generosity of the congregation, the good news is that we already have \$100,000+ of capital campaign money in place to put to good work!

Communication: What Works for You?

Four years ago the Communication Team surveyed the congregation on how people would like to receive information about church activities and events. Since then, times AND communication methods have changed, so the team is launching a new survey to include YOUR opinion on the best ways to foster church communication. There will be an online and paper version of the survey, which should take only a few minutes of your time. If you are reading this message in your email, you can click [here](#) to access the survey. The link will also be included in the next two News from the Pews email messages. If you want to use the paper version of the survey, it will be available in the Sunday bulletin on January 6 & 13. Thank you in advance for your input.

Kay Steeves,
for the Communications Team



Church School

Wow! Church school has had the greatest fall term with mission projects to the Bedford Animal Rescue, Heifer and SHARE Outreach, and the Mill Apartments lunch. *Serving Neighbors Near and Far* and our church school theme, *God Made the Earth, We Must Care For It*, brought in Christmas Eve donations of new stuffed animals as donations to the Shriner's Hospital for Children in Springfield, MA. Thank you to all who support our mission projects.

The Christmas pageant on December 16 was greatly anticipated and warmly received. Thank you to everyone who took a part, character, narrator, leader, director, backstage prop organizer, ministers, choir, choir director, organist, deacons, secretary, parents, teachers, and volunteers.

Prescription eyeglasses that have been gently used are being collected by the church school children before each Sunday service during the month of January. These are then donated to the Amherst Lions Club for *Lions Eyeglass Recycling Centers* (LERCs). LERC volunteers clean, sort by prescription strength and package the glasses ([New Jersey Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center, Inc.](#)).

The winter term began on December 2, and extends to February 24. Lessons focus on the Disciples, Baptism and John the Baptist, Prayer (The Lord's Prayer), and the Beatitudes (refers to a state of spiritual well-being and prosperity).

A challenge to all adults is to serve your neighbors near and far by answering the call to teach our children in church school. Openings exist for PreK and K, and information is available by contacting Marilyn Gibson, Church School Coordinator, at mgibson@ccamherst.org, and at our website.



Mission Moments

Our congregation is constantly engaged in various mission works, both formal and informal. Here are a few of the activities we have been a part of over the last couple of months.

- SHYG made lasagnas for Anne-Marie House, helped with the Community/ Lions Club supper on Friday December 7, and were Santa 'helpers' during Breakfast with Santa.
- Thank you for your generosity and help to bring joy to children and seniors during this Christmas season. It is so important to give to those in need, especially during this time of year when so many need a little extra support. We adopted 15 children from five SHARE families and provided over 65 gifts, including family gifts. We delivered gifts to 25 residents of the Crestwood Nursing home who are looking forward to opening their special presents. 20 gift cards were donated to Bethany Covenant's Operation Christmas Joy, which provides gifts to children that are placed in emergency foster care during the holidays.
- The World Service team and other volunteers joined Santa & Mrs. Claus at Anne-Marie House for a Christmas party – the children all received a special gift and the families enjoyed cookies and cocoa. Thank you to SHYG for wrapping Santa's gifts!
- The church school prepared and delivered food to the Mill apartments in November and enjoyed time visiting with the residents. They continue to work on their mission project for the Shriner's Hospital and will be continuing the annual tradition of donating new stuffed animals to hospital patients in December.
- The Woman's Association held their annual Holiday Fair in November, which raises funds to allow them to continue their important mission work and donations to local organizations.
- Many volunteers helped make the SHARE Community Supper on November 6th and the CCA/Lion's Spaghetti Supper on December 7 huge successes! It is very important to us to be able to offer this special time of food and fellowship to our community members. A special thank you to Bob Gibson, John Swanson, and Bob Miskelly who have worked so hard these past several years on this outreach.

Have a SUCCESSFUL New Year!

The SUCCESS program (Support the UCC with Everyday Shopping Selections) is a fundraiser that runs all year long. The program sells gift cards at face value for a huge variety of shops and restaurants. They make great gifts, or are handy to use when you do your own shopping.

The program has earned close to \$13,000 since it began. You can participate in a variety of ways. One of the handiest is to register on the site www.shopwithscrip.com with our enrollment code A5468F4B36127 and set up a PrestoPay account. You can then order online and print the gift "card" and use immediately, or refill some cards (such as Shaw's, CVS, Walmart, and more) so you're always ready to shop. We have some cards available for immediate sale after church on January 20, and are happy to take orders as well. Stop by with any questions you might have. Make this the year you join in our SUCCESS!

Altar Flowers Always Needed



Donated altar arrangements are always welcome. Flowers can be given to remember a loved one or to celebrate a special occasion. The donor arranges with a local florist to have their chosen flowers delivered. After the service they may take the flowers home or donate them to someone in need of some cheer. There are many openings in the coming months. Please call Anne Krantz (673-9684) to schedule a Sunday.

From the Treasurer

Tim Wiegand, Treasurer

This is a new section of the Spire (and soon to follow in the bulletin.) I hope to publish this monthly to help keep you informed on the finances of the church if you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on the Finance Team: Gail Agans (chair), Doug Topliffe, Tim Wiegand (Treasurer).

Profit and Loss Summary

	November <u>Forecast</u>	November <u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$29,321.92	\$29,400.33	\$78.74
Expenses	32,614.06	33,261.52	647.46
Net	\$(3,292.14)	\$(3,861.19)	\$(568.72)



Senior High Youth Group

Happy New Year SHYG!!

With January's icy roads, extra heavy homework loads, and Sunday night football, SHYG is going to try a CHANGE OF TIME for one month!!

SHYG will meet at 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. for the month of January.

This is a trial run, so let us know what you think!! Feedback is ALWAYS welcome.



Making lasagna's for Anne-Marie House



Helping the Lion's Club and Community Supper clean up



Wrapping presents for Santa's visit to Anne-Marie House!



Youth In Action

“Where is your faith?” An interview with Charlie Vars

By Sue Spiess



Charlie Vars is a busy man now, but he always has been. In his younger years, he was an Industrial Arts teacher, a hockey coach, and a football official in Chelmsford and Andover, Mass. When he and his family moved to Amherst in 1974, he became a real estate broker, a residential builder and developer, and a commercial and industrial construction manager. He is still selling modular housing today and does some construction consulting as well.

Charlie and Rolinda moved to Amherst because this is where they wanted to bring up their family. They raised Ron, Ellen, and Kim here. As lifelong Congregationalists, they joined our church. They became involved in the community. He says that 43 years ago, Vern Trudo “must have asked (me) 20 times” to come to a Lions Club meeting with him. Charlie finally agreed, and since then he has been an active member with perfect attendance at every meeting. He also served as District Governor and Council Chairman of the NH Lions Club. His dedication to the town was recognized when he was named the 2011 Citizen of the Year.

As a builder, Charlie has shared his time and talent with the church over many years. During the late 1970's, it became apparent that the church had outgrown the space available. There was much debate about the need and the ability to raise the funds necessary to expand. Charlie remembers a rather contentious meeting in 1979, when he stood up and asked “Where is your faith?” The congregation decided they could indeed undertake the first major construction project in almost a century. Bob Jackson, architect and church member, finalized the design and Charlie was the construction manager. To reduce costs, the parishioners worked every Saturday for months. 20-30 men would show up to work, and the women provided meals. A few years later, the parishioners and Charlie rebuilt and expanded the entire balcony, and the Vars donated the pews.

As with any historic building and growing congregation, the church building has continued to need expansion, renovation and repair. In 2000, a third floor was added to the 1979 education wing, the steeple was repaired, and the building was made handicapped accessible.

Fast forward to today and more much-needed building updates, repairs, and renovations. The most immediate need has been the replacement of the fire suppression system. Old, corroded pipes presented a real danger to the safety of the building and those who use it. As manager of the project, Charlie has overseen the six months of work needed to replace the entire system.

Asked why he has given so dedicated to the church and the community, Charlie replied, “I am a strong believer in giving back. I've been fortunate enough to have good health.” It is clear where his faith is. When he isn't at the church or at a Lions Club meeting, he is enjoying time with the “loves of his life,” Rolinda and his six granddaughters, who all live nearby.

SHARE Food Pantry

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



January
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!

Thank You from the WA

The women of the Woman's Association would like to thank the following people who selflessly shared their time, energy and some muscles to a very successful 2018 Holiday Fair. Your efforts on our behalf allow the Woman's Association to help our community and our church. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Carole Byatt
Colleen Cushing
Charlie Glover
Wilene Knight
Vicky Leknes
Heather MacDonald
Rob Maxfield
Carolin Sanchez
Anita Swanson
Doug Topliffe

Cindy Beckley
Camille Davis
Sally Hooper
Ted Krantz
Don Lyon
Liz MacMillan
Nadine Obermiller
Sue Spiess
John Swanson

Deb Choiniere
Brooks Fraser
Carl Johnson
Art Leknes
Joan Lyons
Bruce Manchester
Dave Poltack
Dick Stout
Holly Tonnesen

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Steve Blunt

presents

**Liberty Is Our Motto:
Songs and Stories
of the
Hutchinson Family
Singers**

from Milford, NH



Sunday, January 27

4:00 PM

Amherst

Congregational Church

Sanctuary

11 Church St.

Amherst, NH

Free -

Supported by NH Humanities

