

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire



“Never place a period where God has placed a comma.”

—Gracie Allen

THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

March 17, 2019

Second Sunday in Lent

10:00 AM

GATHERING CHIMES

Let us be gathered in silence so that we may prepare to worship.

GREETING AND NOTICES OF PARISH LIFE

PRELUDE

Pastorale on "Blessed Assurance"

Phoebe Palmer Knapp/
Robert Lau

INTROIT

Chancel Choir

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Only the hungry search for bread, only the thirsty look for water.

People: This is a place for those who are hungry and thirsty in spirit.

Leader: Only those who ache for meaning will pursue it, only those who yearn for new life will seek it.

People: This is a place for those who ache and yearn for something more.

Leader: So let us come here today with our hunger and our thirst,

People: our unsatisfied longings, our heart-felt yearnings,

All: and let the God of life satisfy our souls.

*HYMN

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

No. 281

Welcoming God, we give thanks that you have called us to be your people. When we've lost our way in the darkness, you have sent your light. When we are weary and discouraged, you lift us up. In our thirst for meaning and purpose, you bring us living water in Jesus Christ. On this journey of Lent, lead us to the joy of discovery and a vision of future possibilities. Unite us in relationship with one another, and be with us and in us now, as we pray in the words that Jesus taught us: **Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

*GLORIA PATRI (Tune #579)

Glory to the Creator, and to the Christ, and Holy Spirit, One;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of God be with you. AND ALSO WITH YOU.

ANTHEM

O Great God
Chancel Choir

Dan Forrest

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON

Acts 11:1-18

Page 958

SERMON

"Getting in God's Way"

The Rev. Gordon Rankin

*HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

No. 339

You are invited to write your joys and concerns on the prayer cards in the pews, and pass to the minister to be lifted in prayer at this time.

JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYER

CHORAL RESPONSE

Chancel Choir

INVITATION TO SHARE OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Along with our offering collected this morning, we dedicate the generous contributions of those who give monthly or electronically. All of our offerings support the work and witness of Jesus Christ here in this place and in the wider world. Each is given to the glory of God in faithful appreciation for many received blessings. Thanks be to God!

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine

Dale Wood

*DOXOLOGY (Tune: OLD HUNDREDTH, No. 592)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

For life sustaining gifts that we so often take for granted – for shelter, food, and warmth; for your steadfast love that awakens us and rescues us from our wandering ways; for your word that guides and heals us – we give you thanks, gracious God. As we invest a part of all you entrust to us to further the ministries of this church, may we show others the immeasurable riches of your grace. Make this church a beacon of hope for our community and our world. Amen.

*HYMN

Lord, You Give the Great Commission
verses 1, 2 & 3 only

No. 429

*THE LIGHT OF CHRIST GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD

*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

Chancel Choir

*POSTLUDE

Chorale

Heinrich Schütz/
Carson Cooman

(*Indicates that those who are able may stand.)

Our Church Calendar
March 17—23, 2019

Today	8:00 a.m. Breakfast Hosted by Men's Group 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:10 a.m. Fellowship—Community Room 11:15 a.m. Youth Choir—Vestry 6:00 p.m. Senior High Youth Group—Youth Room
Monday	10:00 a.m. WA Workshop—Vestry 7:00 p.m. Fundraising Team—Meeting Room
Tuesday	8:30 a.m. Men's Fellowship—Youth Room 7:00 p.m. New Member Info Session—Parlor
Wednesday	10:00 a.m. <i>Hope: A Pessimist's Guide</i> —Parlor 4:00 p.m. Communications Team—Parlor 6:30 p.m. Lenten Soup & Study Series—Parlor
Thursday	6:00 p.m. Handbell Choir—Sanctuary 7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir—Vestry
Friday	9:00 a.m. Prayerful Playgroup—Nursery



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AMHERST
A Welcoming, Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ



**“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here.”**

We, the members of the Congregational Church of Amherst, New Hampshire, United Church of Christ, believe God’s Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ call us to love all our neighbors as we would want to be loved. We are called to be as one body, seeking to walk together in the full life and ministry of our church.

We welcome each individual as a child of God. As covenant members of Christ’s church, we celebrate God’s love for people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, all mental and physical abilities, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all sexual orientations, all gender identities and gender expressions, and all of the other diverse attributes woven into the fabric of humankind.

With God’s grace, we invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry and fellowship, worship and sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of our church.

We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us this morning. Our membership is open to all those who choose to walk with us in our witness. **The next new member orientation will be held March 19.** New members will be formally received on Sunday, March 24. Please speak with any of our deacons or pastors should you have any questions regarding our church or our membership.

Worship Notes:

- **Nursery Care** is provided for children ages two and under at the beginning of worship.
- **Church School** is available for children in Pre-K through grade 7 immediately following Children’s Time.
- **Joys and Concerns** may be written on the cards found in the pew racks. Cards will be collected by one of the pastors during the middle hymn and shared during the Prayers of the People.
- **Nametags** – Please remember to wear your nametag each Sunday, so that we may all greet our neighbors. If you do not have a permanent nametag, temporary nametags may be found inside the friendship registers. If you are in need of a new, permanent nametag, please see one of the deacons.
- **Fellowship** – Please join us in the community room following worship to welcome visitors and friends.
- **Emergencies** – In the event of an emergency, please remain seated until instructions have been given. An emergency plan is in place for the children in the nursery and in the church school.

The church office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Here’s how to reach us: by telephone 673-3231, or by email andrea@ccamherst.org. If we are unavailable by phone, please feel free to leave a message using the personal directory, and we will get back to you as soon as we can. Visit our church’s website at www.ccamherst.org, and follow us on Facebook at Facebook.com/ccamherst.

Grounded in God’s Love—Serving Neighbors Near and Far—Welcoming to All

PARTICIPATING IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church
Maureen R. Frescott
Katherine Rogers
Gordon Rankin
Sara L. Phelps
Michael Havay
Carol Lyon
Meredith, Obadiah, Oriannah and Mariellah Dart
Fran Baddeley, John and Linda Herrin, Sally Varanka
Marilyn Gibson
Laura Green
Anita and John Swanson

Ministers to the World
Acting Senior Pastor
Acting Associate Pastor
Guest Preacher
Director of Music
Organist/Accompanist
Deacon In Charge
Greeters
Ushers
Church School Coordinator
Nursery Coordinator
Fellowship Hosts

Wendy Valeri

Handbell Choir Director

WE WELCOME THE REV. GORDON RANKIN to our pulpit today. Rev. Rankin is the Conference Minister of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ.

As part of his pre-sermon greetings, Rev. Rankin will ask to take a picture of the congregation to post on the NH Conference Facebook page. If you have any concerns with being in the picture, please inform one of the pastors or Rev. Rankin prior to the service.

ARE YOU READY TO JOIN? Anyone interested in becoming, or just thinking about becoming a member of the Congregational Church of Amherst, UCC, is cordially invited to attend the orientation session on Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m. in the parlor. Find out more about our church and membership. For more information or to sign up for this orientation session, please contact Andrea in the church office at andrea@ccamherst.org or 673-3231. Also, feel free to talk with either pastor or any deacon (green name tag folks). We look forward to hearing from you.

THE FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR are given today with eternal love for Burton Knight, from his family.

PRAYERFUL PLAYGROUP: Our next gathering will be Friday, **March 22**, 9:00—10:30 a.m. in the nursery. All are welcome to join this bi-weekly group of young parents seeking to form deeper relationships in faith—whether you go to this church, or any church, or not at all! In the UCC we say, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

The Lectionary texts for the next two weeks are:

March 24: Isaiah 55:1-9
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

March 31: Joshua 5:9-12
Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

CHURCH SCHOOL: Spring has sprung in church school. Many of us are coaxing spring, with springing ahead, looking for trees with buds, hopefully watching for crocuses to bloom, and of course preparing for Easter. Lent in a Bag is a creative church school means to prepare for Lent. Bags are available in the church office; they are available to anyone.

Church school blossoms with Alison Batey and Nadine Obermiller sharing in our children's faith formation. Sharing our gifts even when there is little to share is our message in today's lesson, The Widow's Offering. Gifts of time, food, shelter, and so on, is a real-life connection for our children.

SHARE Food Pantry in Milford is the church school mission project for March. Please pass on staple products to our church school children before worship. Items will be collected through Sunday, March 31.

MEMBERS OF THE PASTORAL TRANSITION TEAM will be available in the meeting room after worship today, for anyone who may have questions or who would like to voice their thoughts and ideas on the pastoral needs assessment options presented at the Pastoral Needs Assessment forum on Feb. 17. **The options are scheduled for a vote on Sunday, March 24.** Please feel free to contact any of the pastoral transition team members if that is more convenient for you. The Feb. 24 forum presentation material is available electronically or via hard copy in the office or at the discussion sessions for anyone that is interested.

Transition Team members are Sally Bowkett, Judi Dunbar, Maureen Frescott, Susan Holden, Roger Hooper, Vicky Leknes, Susan Manchester, Nancy Protzmann, Will Redway, Doug Topliffe, Todd Whitney, Tim Wiegand.

Wednesdays during Lent



Lenten Soup & Study Series

March 13, 20,
April 3, 10
6:30-8:00 p.m.

Join us in the parlor on four Wednesday evenings during Lent for delicious soup and engaging discussion based on the wonderful book *Help Thanks Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* by Anne Lamott. Together we'll explore how to live in relationship with God through prayer (see Pastor Maureen's *Spire* message this month for more info!) **We'll gather at 6:30 p.m. for a light supper of soup and bread** and the discussion will run from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Pastor Maureen and Pastor Kate will alternate as facilitators of the sessions. The book is available for purchase for \$12 in the church office. Even if you haven't read the book, all are welcome to participate in the meal and discussion!

PEW BIBLES: The Diaconate is preparing to replace the current pew Bibles with ones that are the New Revised Standard Edition (the version we read from on Sunday mornings.) You can donate a Bible for \$10 in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a blessed event. Judi Simpson will be in the community room today taking orders. Forms are also available on the table in the narthex, or contact Andrea in the church office.

SHARE FOOD PANTRY requests for March include pancake mix and syrup, condiments, cooking sauces, seasonings and oils, jelly, and cold cereal. Donations can be left in the SHARE cupboard in the narthex or in the container by the community room entrance. Many thanks for your continuing support!

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Purim

A Story of Mordcai and Esther

Mordecai was an eavesdropper. He hung out by the city gate gathering the latest scoop. One day he caught wind of a plot by Haman, King Xerxes chief of staff, to have all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire exterminated. Mordecai passed the information on to his cousin Esther, also a Jew, who was Xerxes' queen.

Esther convinced her husband to reverse Haman's order which, incidentally, got Haman and his ten sons strung 75 feet up on a gallows Haman had planned for the Jews. And Mordecai? He became the new chief of staff.

The Rev. Eugene Peterson, writing in *The Message* puts it this way:

Mordecai wrote all this down and sent copies to all Jews in King Xerxes' provinces, regardless of distance, calling for an annual celebration on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar as the occasion when Jews got relief from their enemies, the month in which their sorrow turned to joy, mourning somersaulted into a holiday for parties and fun and laughter, the sending and receiving of presents and of giving gifts to the poor. What started then became a tradition. Esther 9.20-22

This is the week when Purim is observed. And this week, we, too, are gift givers to those in need through opportunities such as One Great Hour of Sharing. This is our hour.