

VILLAGE SPIRE

March 2020



CAT Survey Results Presentation



**Sunday, March 1
11:30 a.m. in the Parlor**

Did you miss the January presentation of the CAT (Church Assessment Tool) Survey results? Join us in the parlor after worship on Sunday, March 1 for a second showing of the presentation. Why did the CAT survey designate us as a "Transformational Congregation?" What are we doing well? What could we be doing better? Come and find out!



- March 1 Worship, Church School
Spring Term Begins,
CAT Survey Results
- March 3 Small Group Ministry
- March 4 Lenten Soup & Study
- March 8 Worship, Youth Choir Sings,
Small Group Ministry
- March 11 Lenten Soup & Study
- March 12 New Member Info Session
- March 14 Finding Your Why
- March 15 Worship, Woman's
Association Celebration
- March 18 New Member Info Session,
Middle High Youth Group
- March 22 Worship, New Members
Join
- March 25 Lenten Soup & Study
- March 29 Creative Worship,
Bible Sunday

Covenant for Conversation

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
March 2020

Many of us said it. The world we live in seems to be becoming more divisive and confrontational, especially when it comes to engaging in public discourse. We may lay the blame on partisan politics, the rise of social platforms that give people more freedom to say what is on their minds and a larger audience to hear it, and our 24/7 news media that profits from promoting "us vs. them" storylines and fueling disagreements to pull in viewers. Discord in the public arena is one thing, but when it happens in our family, among our friends, in our church, and in other local circles it's all the more painful and difficult to accept. One of the biggest challenges of living in community is communication. There's no getting around the reality that we carry our whole selves into our interactions with others. We each have our own communication style: we're direct and efficient, we're warm and relational, we're cautious and tentative, we're storytellers and active listeners. We carry our personal histories—past and present—that influence how we relate to others, how we react internally, and how we respond externally. We have preformed opinions, biases and agendas that limit our ability to listen and remain open to new information and change. All of the above can cause us to make assumptions, misunderstand or misinterpret one another, and have us throwing up our hands in disgust when communication breaks down. Given all of the above, it's worth celebrating that we manage to communicate with one another at all in a fruitful and affirming way!

This is all to say that we're human, and as we navigate the channels of communication it's good to keep in mind that we bring all of our imperfections with us. Anyone who has been part of a church community for any length of time

Continued on page 3



Lenten Soup and Study Series Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 25 and April 1 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: *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again* by Rachel Held Evans. With Rachel's insight and humor as our guide, we'll wrestle with our doubts, imaginations, and the mysteries of scripture, and discover that the Bible is not a static work but is a living, breathing, captivating, and confounding book that equips to join God's loving work in the world.

We'll gather at 6:30 p.m. for a light supper of soup and bread and the discussion will run from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Pastor Maureen and Pastor Kate will alternate as facilitators of the sessions. The book is available for purchase for \$10 in the church office. The first session will focus on the first TWO chapters of the book, and each successive session will focus on the following two chapters. Even if you haven't read the book, all are welcome to participate in the meal and discussion!

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,
(603) 673-6848
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 Thursday morning.

OUR CHURCH STAFF:

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

Rev. Katherine R. Kennedy
Associate Pastor
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Andrea Cyr
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Sara L. Phelps
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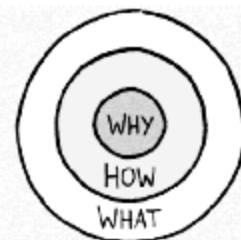
Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Wendy Valeri
Bell Choir Director
wendylazott@tds.net

Marilyn Gibson
Church School Coordinator
mgibson@ccamherst.org

Finding Your Why

Saturday, March 14
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Community Room
Lunch will be Provided



Join us for a special workshop designed to help us “Find Your Why” – the reason WHY we come to church as individuals and the reason WHY we are church together. Our WHY is our motivation for all that we do. It’s where we find meaning, purpose and joy. A church that knows its collective WHY has a clearer understanding of its mission, is better able to articulate and live into that mission, and draw in others who connect with that mission.

If you’re interested in participating, please contact the church office or Pastor Maureen at pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

RSVP’s are required as we need to determine the group size for the purpose of the exercises.



Time to Order Easter Lilies

Orders for lily plants used to decorate the chancel for Easter Sunday will be taken after church in the community room on Sundays, March 15, 22 and 29; or you can stop by or call the church office to place your order.

Donate a plant in memory of a loved one or in celebration of Easter. Your name and those you wish to remember will be printed in the bulletin. After the Easter services you may keep your lily or donate it to someone in need of some springtime cheer.

Our local grower provides lush plants with either one or two bulbs per pot - \$12 for singles or \$19 for the huge double pots.

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 one of two orientation sessions scheduled for Thursday, March 12 and Wednesday, March 18 at 7:00 p.m. in the parlor. New members will be formally received on Sunday, March 22. For more information or to sign up for one of the orientation sessions, 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.

SHARE Food Pantry

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

March
Pantry Requests:
pancake mix and syrup,
condiments, cooking
sauces and seasonings,
cooking oils, jelly,
cold cereal



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!

Covenant for Conversation, continued from page 1

knows that communication plays a key role in the health and vitality of the church, for better or for worse. Church is one of the few remaining places in our society where people of diverse generations, backgrounds and beliefs gather and aspire to be community together – agreeing to worship, learn, play and work together for a common cause: to serve God. This makes healthy communication all the more challenging and important. For this reason, many churches choose to follow an agreed upon “Community Covenant,” behavioral guidelines that help facilitate conversations in committee and congregational meetings, small group gatherings, and whenever people gather to grow in relationship with one another and do the work of the church. In our church, some of our small groups have already adopted such a covenant. Our Small Group Ministry program and our Senior High Youth Group, for example, take time during their first meetings every year to review and remind themselves of their covenant and adapt it as needed. It’s important that the guidelines reflect the needs of the group and that all agree to its contents. That’s what makes it a covenant – a mutual agreement to abide by a set of promises that in the end benefits the individuals and the group as a whole.

Covenants are particularly useful when a group is tasked with resolving a conflict, having conversations about difficult issues, or making decisions in situations where many opposing viewpoints exist. Here’s an example of a “Covenant for Conversation:”

1. We will begin with prayer.
2. We agree to confine our statements to two (2) minutes.
3. We agree to use “I” statements and speak only for ourselves. For example: I feel, I believe, I fear, I hope, etc.
4. We agree not to make others (or ourselves) “wrong” for the perspectives we hold.
5. We agree to listen respectfully to others and pause between speakers for time to ask clarifying questions. For example: “Can you say more about...” “Help me understand what you mean when you say...” “What is your most pressing concern when you say...”
6. Some topics may be put in a “Parking Lot” for future conversations.
7. We agree to be open to new possibilities none of us have imagined yet.
8. If we have pressing concerns we will bring them directly to the person(s) involved whenever possible.
9. We will thank the Holy Spirit for guidance even in difficult conversations.

Communication challenges are inevitable as our congregation continues to engage in conversation about what it means to be a transformational church. We are not all going to agree on what new ministries, programs and changes we wish to adopt to address the priorities named in the CAT survey, and how to be good stewards of our resources when it comes to our Stewardship and Capital Campaigns. In the spirit of being proactive rather than reactive, I encourage our council, our ministry teams, our ad-hoc teams, our small groups, and our congregation as a whole to consider adopting a “Covenant for Conversations” like the one above. As the CAT survey results revealed, we’re a healthy church that values effective and open communication, and adopting a covenant speaks to that value.

It’s always good to remind ourselves that as we work together toward a common cause – to serve God by serving one another – we’re not always going to agree on how to get there. What a covenant gives us most of all is the opportunity to practice grace. As we offer grace to others, and ourselves, in recognition that we are all children of God.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



Small Groups Bring Us Closer Together and Closer to God!

Our theme this year is BE THE CHURCH, using the bold statements issued by the United Church of Christ to inspire us to live our faith in the world. In March, our focus statement is “Love God.” When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus responded, “To love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.” What does loving God look like in our everyday life? Does loving God mean that we can never be angry with God, or feel as if God is missing in our life? What happens if we don’t love God? Are there consequences? What role does free will play in our ability to choose to love God, or not?

March Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday Group, March 3,
1:30–3:00 p.m.
Sunday Group, March 8
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Upcoming Group Discussion Topics:

April: Fight For the Powerless
May: Share Earthly and Spiritual Resources
June: Enjoy this Life

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



Reasons Why Sunday School is Important

"The goal of Christian formation is not to create churchgoers; the goal of Christian formation is to raise up disciples of Jesus Christ."

Reason #4: Form Good Habits

If you start consistently taking your kiddos to church when they're young, they will forever learn the good habits of church attendance. For the rest of their lives, they'll benefit from the knowledge they gained in Sunday school.



Spring Term Begins on Sunday, March 1

LESSONS: Readings from the New Testament bring to children God's words of love, forgiveness and salvation. Children practice these teachings through activities, games and meaningful role playing.

Teachers: Church School welcomes Leona Hendrickson with Pre-K/K, Sue Werst and Rebekah Bolin with grades 1 and 2, Gretchen Davis and Larissa Riley with grades 3 and 4, and Dave Hagerstrom with grades 5, 6 and 7.

Prayer: Children have practiced how and why we talk with God and Jesus. Matthew 6:5-15 addresses prayer with the disciples. In church school, the "Five Finger Prayer" is shared to practice for whom we pray.

Lent: Church school lessons during the period of Lent provide activities to emphasize the teachings of God. Children are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of Jesus: prayer, sacrifice and giving will be shared during class time. Parents will be invited to join their children by engaging in various take home activities. These will be distributed during church school and posted on our church school website.

Bible Sunday is on March 29: Children in our church school who received their own Bible in the fall will read their special passage to worshippers during the service. During church school, each child had opportunities to read their passage, where their teacher and fellow students shared ideas related to its message.

The Five Finger Prayer

- Thumb: Those closest to you, your family.
- Pointer: Those that point you in the right direction (teachers, doctors, priests) ask for wisdom and support.
- Index: (tallest) Those that lead us, (Government) ask for guidance and wisdom.
- Ring: (weakest) Those that are weak, in trouble, or in pain. We cannot pray too much for them.
- Pinkie: (smallest) Our prayers for ourselves and our own needs.



Youth Choir ~ 2020

We are having such fun! There is a wonderful group already, come join us! Grab a snack from coffee hour and meet in the vestry.

Are children of any age welcome? Of course, keep in mind that we do some reading and some of the music may be challenging for the very young. Little ones are ALWAYS welcome to join us.

I get nervous singing in front of people, do I have to sing alone? No, we sing together, singing as a group is fun.

How often do we sing in church? I hope we will sing once a month, let's see how it goes!

I don't read music! I am sending the printed music home with the children. I plan to incorporate note and rhythm reading in the rehearsal time. It takes time to develop these skills. We begin by learning the words and melody, singing along with me and the piano.

What do I wear? We have robes - gold robes for smaller children and maroon robes for the older kids.

How often do we rehearse? Every Sunday after church. If anything changes, I will let you know by email.

What if I need to miss a rehearsal? That happens! I will make sure that the Sunday we are actually singing during the church service is in the calendar in advance.

Further questions? Please contact me at kalben1@comcast.net

Sara Phelps, Director of Music

Serendipity: Amherst is Their Home An Interview with Barbara and Bob Williams

By Sue Spiess



Call it serendipity. Or say "it was meant to be." For many years, Barbara and Bob Williams came to Amherst to visit their good friend, Jean Hogan, often enjoying the Fourth of July parade. When their former son-in-law needed some gardening advice for his Foundry Street home, he called Barbara. Several months later, he decided to move and the Williamses knew that his home was perfect for them. Bingo! They moved in on May 1, 2017.

Barbara was transplanting flowers from her Concord gardens a few days later, when the church bells started tolling her favorite hymn, "Morning Has Broken." Her immediate thought: "I'm home." Barbara and Bob's neighbors, Sally and Roger Hooper, invited them to church on Sunday, which happened to be our 275th anniversary celebration. They sat next to Carol and Don Lyon, who made them feel right at home. When Pastor Dick Leavitt said, "Wherever you are in life's journey, you are welcome here," it resonated with them. Then the choir sang Handel's *Messiah*, and Bob told me he could not believe the quality of our "small town choir." Barbara and Bob soon joined the church that they found so "loving and welcoming."

Now retired, both Barbara and Bob were attorneys in Boston. Barbara began her work as an attorney specializing in First Amendment rights with publishers and insurance companies. That led to a job in Houghton Mifflin's General Counsel's office, reading books prior to publication, looking for defamatory remarks that could create problems for the publisher. Travelling internationally and meeting authors and publishers led to some exciting moments, including reading the script of *Forrest Gump*, meeting Tom Hanks, and attending the movie premiere.

Barbara has jumped into life in Amherst with both feet: She leads the Grant subcommittee of the Capital Campaign and has done yeoman's work writing proposals with Pat Buben and securing grants. She is a member of the Woman's Association, and an active member of the Amherst Garden Club.

Specializing in general corporate and securities law, Bob practiced for 48 years. In addition, he was a trustee of Mass Eye & Ear Infirmary for 28 years and on their Human Study Committee for 14 years, reviewing experimental protocols. Now he is happily reading all the books he collected over the years that he never had time to read while working! He has also volunteered to serve as a Trustee of Invested Funds and Memorial Gifts.

Three of their four children live within driving distance, and one daughter lives in Phoenix, giving them an opportunity to see their families and to travel to warmer climates. Fortunately for us, Barbara and Bob have happily made Amherst their home. Clearly, it was "meant to be!"

News from your Congregational Care Team

Are you interested in being contacted about helping with meals for members of our congregation? Are you available to help with transportation?

Our ministry is a blessing to those who have been on the receiving end of a homecooked meal, help with a ride, a visit, a note or a call.

We have been blessed with so much generosity and support, we are updating our list of helpers. Would you like to be added to the list of volunteers?

Sara Phelps, Congregational Care Coordinator

Team Members: Sally Hooper, Charlie Glover, Carol Lyon, Heather MacDonald, Bruce Manchester, Cynthia Sears, Jean Tonnesen, Chris Trudo, Pastor Maureen, Pastor Kate

Financial Summary (as of January 31, 2020)

	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$276,601	\$257,995	\$18,607
Expenses	\$262,862	\$266,191	\$(3,329)
Net Income	\$ 13,739	\$(8,197)	\$21,936

Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole dollar; as such, some columns may not appear to total correctly.

We hope you are finding this information helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on the Finance Team: Gail Agans (chair), Paul Spiess, Doug Topliffe, Todd Whitney and Tim Wiegand (Treasurer).

Rev. Josiah Gardner Davis, 1844 to 1880 b. 1815 - d. 1894

Anne Krantz, Historian



"The Church in Amherst" as described in our 1741 Covenant got off to a stable start under the leadership of our first four capable ministers. From 1741 to 1837 they guided the congregation and the community with steady hands. But several quick turn-overs followed, and not until the Reverend Josiah Gardner Davis seemingly came out of no where to accept the call to be our minister, did we enjoy the stability that long tenures bring.

Gene Cronin, church historian from 1999 to 2001, researched and wrote a series of excellent articles for the *Spire*. But the one about Rev. Davis was missing. Happily I just found a copy when I was cleaning out files. Jean Crocker sent it to me when I was working on the Brick School 150th Anniversary celebration in 2004. Here it is with a few additions and updates:

"Josiah Gardner was the seventh minister of the Amherst congregation, serving for 36 years from 1844 to 1880. He was born in Concord, Mass. In 1815, he began teaching school at 16, and graduated from Yale in 1836. He decided to leave teaching for the pulpit and began at Andover Seminary in Mass. He graduated from Union Theological College in NY city in 1841. He was ordained in 1844 in Amherst, which was his first and last pastorate.

He believed that a pastor should nurture the spiritual needs of his congregation and serve the civic needs of his community. He developed a philosophy that merged the spiritual and the political in the role of Christian Minister and articulated that philosophy in a sermon he gave at Thanksgiving, 1856. The sermon was so well thought of that his parishioners had it printed for distribution and it was still being discussed by other ministers 30 years later.

The sermon was titled, "The Independence of the Pulpit, Essential to its Power." By independence, Dr. Davis meant that a minister should not be afraid to challenge his congregation's comfort. "If a minister consults the wishes of his hearers and reflects his themes in accordance with their prejudices, he will be subjected to an intolerable bondage," he said.

In his sermon, he compared the role of an independent ministry to that of a free press and felt that both should actively speak the truth. A minister, he said, should be willing to confront political issues. People, he said, take exception to preaching against "systemized wrongs, which are sheltered by legal enactment. These subjects are called political and any allusion to them in the pulpit is pronounced improper." But he felt ministers had obligations to preach on issues of integrity, responsibility, honesty and, if they became public issues, the obligation to speak out remained.

Dr. Davis served as a trustee of Dartmouth College for many years and was a member of the American Board of Missionaries. Closer to home he was chairman of the School Board from 1852 to 1884 and oversaw the construction of Amherst's first High School, now known as the Brick School.

According to the *Farmers Cabinet*, the School Board, under Dr. Davis, established the following rules for admission. 'Scholars to be admitted to the High School must be able to pass a satisfactory examination in the several branches as far as required to be pursued in the intermediate school (this would have been a test in English, Geography, Mathematics, History, and Rhetoric.) Studies in the High School are to embrace all the branches necessary for a complete English education, with Latin and Greek, so far as is required for admission to college. Scholars are to be admitted to the school from out of the district at 25 cents per month.'

Dr. Davis was also chair of the library trustees and, toward the end of his life, he worked to create a permanent library for the town. At the time, the library was in the Town Hall. By the 1890s, it had grown to 2,000 volumes and was in need of its own building. Davis proposed that each member of the committee compete to see who could bring in the most toward the \$1,000 needed to build a new building. With subscriptions, the townspeople raised \$2,800. A site was chosen at the end of Edmund Parker's garden in the Village, an architect was hired, and because they had money left over, they decided to use local granite instead of wood. By the fall of 1891, the building was completed. It was dedicated the following April and stands today as his legacy to Amherst."

Rev. Josiah Gardner Davis was not only the esteemed and admired minister of the Congregational Church, he was the Town Father. Upholding high moral standards, he also promoted community literacy and education goals. He worked diligently to establish Amherst High School (not an academy), as a public prep school for admission to college, with stringent admission requirements.

He lived in Amherst for 40 years. He moved into the Spalding house when he married Abby A. Spalding in 1848. It became a 2-family house and he converted the front left parlor into his office. Upon the death of Dr. Spalding in 1865 he became the owner.

Amherst was truly his home. The first sentence of his obituary, in the March 22, 1894 issue of the *Farmers Cabinet*:
"In the death of Dr. Davis, a long life of usefulness and value to the church and community, comes to an end."

Our Time, Our Turn: Planning and Work Continues on our Capital Campaign

As anyone who has undertaken a large-scale renovation process knows, there are times when everything seems to be happening at once, and times when it LOOKS like progress has stalled. Our visible capital campaign projects so far—the fire suppression system, alarm system, electrical work, exterior painting of the parsonage, the parsonage roof and chimney repairs, planting of maple trees, and replacement of the kitchen water heater—are done. The parsonage windows are being replaced, 5 or 7 at a time (remember, this is New England and it is cold in the winter!).

What an incredible list of accomplishments in less than a year! HUGE and heartfelt thanks go to the building team of Doug Topliffe (team lead), Charlie Vars, Alicia Wight, Jack Buben, John Swanson, Anne Krantz, Dick and Sue Stout, and Todd Whitney. They have worked tirelessly to make sure things are done properly, on time, and sometimes even under budget.

Due to the hard work of Barbara Williams and Pat Buben, we received funds which covered 100% of the cost of a Building Assessment Study (BAS). The BAS was funded in part by the NH Preservation Alliance, which receives support for its grant program from the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). Contributions from the NH Charitable Fund and an anonymous donation brought the total received to \$12,750. Steve Bedard of Bedard Preservation begins the assessment this month. A BAS study is extremely helpful (and often necessary) when applying for LCHIP and other grants, and will also help us to plan for future needs. Work on applying for additional grants continues.

Progress hasn't stalled; it just isn't as visible at the moment, as the next project on "the list" requires additional study. At the congregational meeting in November, Doug Topliffe, Sue and Dick Stout, and Charlie Vars presented a plan for the kitchen renovation that they, along with John Swanson, had spent countless months researching and developing. Following discussion, it was determined that the plan was a good starting point, but our previous projects have been supported and successful because the congregation was able to decide among three alternative proposals and approaches.

As a result, the capital campaign team has decided to hire an independent kitchen planner/designer to draw up 2-3 possible kitchen designs that can be put out for 3 competitive bids. This approach will provide options and design packages using comparative bids. Multiple designers will be interviewed before committing to one. The research continues, and when the bid and proposal efforts are completed, there will be a congregational meeting to make a decision. As we have stressed throughout, we will never spend money that we don't have in hand.

None of these projects would be possible without the support of you, the congregation, and the community at large. You have truly taken our slogan, "Our Time, Our Turn" to heart and made it possible to make the necessary repairs and renovations to keep our meetinghouse and parsonage safe, secure, and welcoming to all. Thank you!



Season of Lent



**Middle High
Youth Group**
March 18, 6:00—8:00 p.m.

We had a great first meeting of the MHYG last month, and we are excited for the rest of the year! All students in grades 5-7 are welcome to join us every third Wednesday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. In addition to the weekly church school class for grades 5, 6 and 7 taught by Dave Hagerstrom, MHYG will be a time set aside for fun, fellowship and service. Pastor Kate, Mr. Dave Hagerstrom, and Mrs. Kathleen Cashins are this year's MHYG leaders, and they have a whole lot of exciting MHYG plans up their sleeves. And as always, friends are more than welcome to join in the fun!

Please email pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information.



**Calling All
Cookie
Bakers!**

On Sunday, April 5, the Senior High Youth Group will host its annual Cookie Walk in the community room following worship. If you LOVE to bake, if you have a favorite cookie recipe, or if you just like joining in the fun, start thinking about what cookie you would like to bring to this cornucopia of cookies! All cookie donations are welcome and extremely appreciated. Email pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information.

The Congregational Church
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Amherst, NH 03031

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