

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

VILLAGE SPIRE

May 2020



Gather Us In

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
May 2020

*We are the young, our lives are a mystery
We are the old who yearn for your face
We have been sung throughout all of history
Called to be light to the whole human race
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty
Gather us in, the proud and the strong
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly
Give us the courage to enter the song*



Sunday at 10:00 a.m.
on Facebook and
Our CCA Website

We may not be able to gather in person, but we're still gathering together virtually every Sunday morning. Join us on Facebook at 10:00 a.m. as Pastor Maureen, Pastor Kate, and our music team of Michael, Sara, and Wendy provide us with our traditional worship in a non-traditional way! Enjoy an interactive experience with our Facebook Premiere video by leaving your comments, participating in the service, and checking in with others watching. You can also watch the service through our CCA website, where you can download the bulletin and submit a prayer request. Then join us after worship at 11:00 a.m. for our ZOOM Coffee Hour! You'll find the link to coffee hour on our website.

No matter how we worship or where we worship we do so together. We will continue to be the church from afar until we can gather once again!

These verses from the hymn "Gather Us In" once echoed off the walls of our sanctuary as we came before God as the gathered body of Christ, lifting our voices with song and praise and joy. Here in early May, as we face four more weeks of social distancing, and likely much longer, we're all wondering when we'll be able to do any of this again – gather, sing, lift our voices with praise and joy.

This past week, Governor Sununu revealed the first phase of the state of New Hampshire's plan for loosening the Stay at Home order restrictions in response to Covid-19. Some businesses will be allowed to reopen provided they take precautions to ensure the safety of the public and their workers. While churches were not included in this phase of the plan and the Stay at Home order continues to prohibit gatherings of over 10, the Governor implied that churches would be addressed in the next phase of the plan to be announced in early June. At its May meeting, our church Council discussed what we might choose to do as a

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Our Time, Our Turn: The Virus Hasn't Stopped Our Progress



Even COVID-19 won't stop the capital campaign projects from moving forward! Here is our monthly update on our progress:

- We were fortunate to have engaged Steve Bedard of Bedard Preservation and Restoration to conduct a Baseline Assessment Study (BAS) before the virus became a threat here. Mr. Bedard toured the meetinghouse in early March and now has all the research material he needs to complete the BAS. Any questions he has can be answered via phone or email and the completed study will be forwarded in time to apply for an LCHIP (Land and Community Heritage Investment Program) grant.
- Work on the kitchen design also continues. Jason LaCombe of SMP Architects is developing kitchen concepts and has approaches almost ready to share with the building team, probably conducted via a ZOOM meeting.
- Interior painting repairs, needed after the fire suppression system and electrical work were completed, are done.

The capital campaign committee will continue to update you through our many methods of communication, and we look forward to seeing you "in person" sometime soon!

You've
Got
Mail

Would you like
to receive printed
copies of Sunday's
sermons via US

Mail? If you're unable to access our online worship services and would like to receive a weekly packet of our printed Sunday bulletin, scripture, sermon, and prayer concerns let us know! Contact Andrea in the church office and we'll add you to our weekly mailing list!

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
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Associate Pastor
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Marilyn Gibson
Church School Coordinator
mgibson@ccamherst.org

New Section for Members on Website

We want to make sure everyone is aware of the MEMBERS section of our church's website. The security to this private area requires you to set up an account with a user ID and password. To request an account, please go to our website (ccamherst.org) and click on the [MEMBERS](#) menu option, and then click on 'Request User Account' and fill out the form. If you prefer, you can also email Nancy Protzmann directly at uvmcats84@gmail.com

This private area includes the following:

- Current church directory and a form to update contact information,
- Sensitive church financial documents,
- Past annual reports and annual meeting presentations,
- Monthly Council minutes,
- General policy documents,
- A form to submit and view prayer requests,
- Photo galleries.



ZOOM

We continue to be an active church as most of our in-person meetings, groups, and gatherings have now moved online! ZOOM is a virtual meeting place that can be accessed with a computer, tablet, cell phone or a regular house phone/landline. No computer access or ability is needed! Here are just a few of our programs and ministries that continue to meet via ZOOM:

Church School, Small Group Ministry, Confirmation, Middle & Senior High Youth Groups, Parent's Group, Choir chats, Sunday Coffee Hour, Women's Association, and the Men's Group. We continue to do the "work" of the church as well as our Council, Deacons, Stewardship, Christian Education, World Service and Communications teams are meeting on Zoom. Pastor Kate is also doing weekly Zoom check-ins with our Church School kids and parents.

If you would like to schedule a Zoom meeting or gathering with your ministry team or group, contact Andrea in the church office and she'll put you on the schedule and send you a link for your group members.



Financial Summary (as of March 31, 2020)

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Difference
Income	\$334,836	\$317,592	\$17,244
Expenses	\$327,535	\$329,466	\$(1,931)
Net Income	\$ 7,301	\$(11,873)	\$19,174

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).

Gather Us In, continued from page 1

congregation should larger gatherings be permitted in June. How might we respond in a way that lives into our mission to serve one another in love, knowing that doing so includes caring for the most vulnerable among us? Our plan at this time is to cautiously watch how the virus responds as the state gradually opens up, and to also consider that even if the threat appears to lessen in the summer months there may be a resurgence as we move into the colder months of fall. We're also aware that many members of our church community are at a higher risk given their age and other medical conditions that worsen the effects of the virus. There are many questions that we'll need to consider as we continue to "wait and see" what happens in our larger community. If we do gather, what will that look like? How far apart would we need to sit? Would all in attendance need to wear masks? Would singing even be a possibility given how far the virus is carried by the projected voice, even with a mask? How would we safely sanitize our sanctuary and our building given how many surfaces are touched by multiple people in succession – door handles, railings, pews? Given the risks and the precautions we'd need to take, how many among us would consider returning to a gathered worship? How many would choose not to come, and possibly be faced with a weekly internal struggle of whether to come and put themselves at risk, or to stay away and feel left out or disregarded? Quite a few of you have already expressed that you won't feel safe going out to restaurants or other public gatherings until there's a widely available vaccine for the virus, which we've been told may not come until early next year at the soonest. As with any pandemic, there is much that is known – the current dangers that we can take steps to respond to, and there is much that is unknown – the future behavior of the virus, and the people, as we move into a "new normal" of living in community.

Part of this new normal may be discovering new ways to be together in the in-between-time – the time between the lifting of the more stringent Stay at Home restrictions and the discovery and distribution of a vaccine. Perhaps we could gather in smaller groups, in outside spaces over the summer and in early fall. We might devise new ways of having music in worship – instruments only, or a soloist who stands far apart from others. If needed, we could return to our online worship over the winter months, until the threat lessens. And we will surely continue to care for one another when limited contact is called for – with phone calls, cards, emails, the delivering of meals, and driveway visits done from a distance. In the meantime, in this time, the work of our church continues, albeit in a different way. Our lay leaders, ministry teams, children, youth, and adult programs, social and activity groups, all continue to meet virtually and be community to and for one another. And our weekly online worship brings us together in the virtual worlds of Facebook, YouTube, and Zoom.

At this time, we can't say when we will gather together in person as a community. But we are still the gathered body of Christ as we're commissioned to be the presence of God for one another – loving, holding, lifting, inspiring, comforting, challenging, encouraging, giving, and forgiving...

*Not in the dark of buildings confining
Not in some heaven light years away
But here in this place the new light is shining
Now is the kingdom, now is the day
Gather us in and hold us forever
Gather us in and make us your own
Gather us in, all peoples together
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones*

Be safe and be well,

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 May, our focus statement is "Share Earthly and Spiritual Resources." Generosity is a theme we often talk about in church in terms of stewardship - a celebration of the many ways that we give back to God. But while stewardship campaigns seem to focus solely on our "earthly resources," what does it mean to be generous with our "spiritual resources?" What are our spiritual resources and how might we see them as a gift we have to give? What does it take to see ourselves as "wealthy" – as living in abundance regardless of the size of our bank account, given all that God has given us?

We currently have two Small Groups, one meets on the first Tuesday of every month from 1:30-3:00 p.m., and one meets on Sunday after worship once a month. If you're interested in joining one of our groups please contact Pastor Maureen at 673-3231 x14, or email her at pastormaureen@ccamherst.org.



Support from the Women (and Men) is Nothing New

Anne Krantz, Historian

I recently discovered this interesting article by Sharon Beckley that she wrote for the *Spire* when she was church historian in the 90s. I wish I knew where she found the information; church Annual Reports may have been a source, but of course there is no index. I do know from reading through some 1950s –1970s reports that the Woman's Association provided the funds for the kitchen through its many renovations and upgrades, including the purchase of our present gas stove. Before the addition in 1979 when our present kitchen was built, the kitchen was located where the nursery is now. As Sharon noted it was upgraded in 1966 and 1977. One renovation entailed changing the sink; the old copper one was replaced. The women recycled the copper by having it made into cooking ladles that they sold to raise additional funds. They were beautifully made by a church metalworker-artisan who did an skillful job forging the handles and riveting it together.

The women assumed the lead on managing and upgrading the kitchen because they used it. They held monthly hot luncheon meetings, with a speaker or program for 70 to over 100 attendees. No paper plates in those days!!

To this day, the Woman's Association continues to help manage the kitchen with a position of Kitchen Chair, currently Sue Stout. She monitors and inventories it regularly, cleans as needed (stoves!) and, with WA funds, buys the cleaning and consumable products: soap and sponges, paper products, replacement of broken or lost utensils and dishes, coffee pots, and even the newest refrigerator. These expenses are paid for from proceeds from the Holiday Fair and the two rummage sales. Back in the hot-luncheon epoch, the WA members raised money from everything they did, including golf and bridge groups.



Support from the Women (and Men) is Nothing New

By Sharon Beckley

In the town's early history, very few words are used to describe the women of the town or the church. Both the Souhegan Grange and the Marguerite Circle of the Kings Daughters had hard-working women who ran fairs, food sales and entertainments to raise money for special projects for both the Baptist and Congregational churches. Clothing and money over the years was sent to county farms, orphanages and day nurseries in Nashua and other places of need all over the world.

Until 1832, the church belonged to the town and few repairs were made to keep it up, but with the change in the NH statutes about the support of religious institutions, the town gave up the house by auction to the highest bidder. The congregation bought the church for one dollar. Many repairs were needed and more seating was desired. The floor was raised, windows were replaced, and a gallery was constructed over the entry which furnished seats for the choir. The church was reopened in 1837.

From that date, no changes were made in the structure of the house until 1857 when the pulpit was refitted, the aisles recarpeted and the pews painted. It should be noted here that the expense each time was defrayed by the ladies of the congregation.

Extensive renovations were again done in 1950. In 1966, the Woman's Association celebrated its 100th anniversary by renovating the kitchen. Again in 1973 more renovations were done to the kitchen, the church vestry and the installation of a new security system. The washrooms were remodeled and repairs were made to the balcony in 1977.

1978 saw the completion of the extensive redecoration of the sanctuary with a celebration and lunch provided by the women. In 1979, an addition to the meetinghouse consisted of two stories plus a basement at the cost of \$300,000. The balcony was refurbished and pews were installed. The second floor of this new parish house was completed in 1982. On January 20, 1984, the mortgage was finally burned. Again many thanks go to the women and to the many men who helped with the building and raising the funds.



In 1985, an elevator was added. The church received needed repair work in 1987 as all the siding was replaced, new windows were installed on the lower floors, and the west side was jacked up to repair a sinking foundation. In 1988, the Memorial Garden was completed for the internment of ashes. In 1990, work continued on the parsonage, including an additional bathroom, and a sprinkler system was installed in the meetinghouse.

Work continues always on the church and the parsonage, and many thanks go both to the women and the men who have so willingly given of their time and treasure to keep this house of worship in good order. Thank you all.

Everyone Could Win \$\$\$!

"How?" you might ask – it's simple! Purchase raffle tickets! Here are the details:

- 10 Cash prizes range from \$500 - \$5,000. Yes, you could win \$5,000!
- Ticket price is \$20 and \$10 of that comes straight back to our church – more sales = more \$\$ for CCA
- The drawing will take place on Friday, 26 June, rain or shine, golf or no golf.

Please share this information with 10 family members and/or friends!

Bonus: each ticket comes with 6 great coupons: \$20 off at Giorgio's restaurant, \$10 off a full-service oil change at Valvoline in Milford, one hour free rental at Amherst Country Club indoor golf simulator, 2 for 1 comedy show admission at Zinger's, 15% discount at The Copy Shop, and 10% off Humble Kitchen (see ticket for details for coupon restrictions).

Bigger bonus: If you would like to designate the church as the recipient of any winnings, CCA might just win something too! If you would like to do this, please email Sally Hooper at sallyhoop@comcast.net with your name and how many of your purchased tickets you would like designated with the church as the prize recipient.

This is a fundraising effort of the Milford Rotary Club in conjunction with their 100 Holes of Golf in One Day charity tournament. Each year this event raises considerable funds that are distributed to local, regional and international community and non-profit organizations, and are used to provide \$30,000 in scholarships to area students.

Purchase tickets at <https://pay.golf100holes.com/?charity=Amherst%20Congregational%20Church>

If you prefer not to purchase online, you can mail a check to the church (please write raffle in the memo line and include an address so we can mail you the ticket): 11 Church Street, Amherst, NH 03031.

All tickets purchased will be mailed to the address provided during the purchase.

Please contact Sally Hooper at sallyhoop@comcast.net or 603-321-1143 for questions or more details.



If you have a prayer request that you would like to submit to our pastors we have several ways you can do so! Email or leave a phone message for Pastor Maureen at 603-673-3231 x11, or go to our church website and submit a "Prayer Request" by clicking on the link.

Let us know if you'd like your prayer request to be read during our Sunday online worship (with or without full names mentioned). You may also choose to share your request with our internal email prayer chain only, or with just the pastors.

SHYG Mission Trip: Postponed

The Senior High Youth Group announces with heavy hearts that this year's mission trip to Denver, CO, scheduled for June 14-20, has been canceled due to the challenges of gathering and traveling during the Covid-19 pandemic. The SHYG will work together to think of a creative alternative to this beloved tradition! But for now, we would like to thank the church for your support to this group, now and in the future.

The SHYG is staying connected through check-ins, prayer chains and weekly challenges! Email pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information.



We are still connected to one another even as we're apart! If you're unable to leave your home and need help with grocery shopping or errands, please let us know! We have volunteers standing by who've offered to help. If you'd like to help keep us connected by volunteering to make phone calls or send cards and letters to our members and friends, please let us know as well! Contact our Congregational Care Coordinator, Sara Phelps or our Pastors if you're able to help or if you need a helping hand!

Thank you!!

The Diaconate would like to thank everyone for their generosity during this challenging time, in support of our Friendship Basket collection. Thanks to your donations, we were able to provide grocery gift cards to 10 families in need this Easter season. All were very appreciative!

SHARE Food Pantry

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



May
Pantry Requests:
canned ham, canned meats, side dishes (seasoned pasta mix, Hamburger Helper, etc.), ravioli and Beef-a-Roni, refried beans, and condiments

Donations should be brought directly to the SHARE Center in Milford; if you are unsure where, please call their office at 673-9898. Thank you for your continuous support!

Middle High Youth Group: Virtual Meeting May 20

The Middle High Youth Group (open to all kids grades 5-7) will be meeting via Zoom on May 20 at 6:00 p.m. MHYG is a time for fun, fellowship and faith, and during our meeting we hit all three with check-ins, games, discussion and prayer. And just like when we meet in person, friends are always welcome to join us at virtual MHYG, too! Check your emails for the MHYG zoom link, and feel free to share it with any families that could use some extra connection.

Email pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information.

Welcome to Church School

Marilyn Gibson, Church School Coordinator

We are on Zoom! Each Sunday, church school starts at 9:00 a.m. and ends in a timely fashion for you to share worship. Our schedule (see News & Events, Calendar on our website) remains the same.

Faith formation and spiritual growth are dependent on the Bible's stories that are shared with our children. The stories are aptly appropriate in our stay at home directive as we are called upon to face many challenges. We know the Fruits of The Spirit—love, joy, peace, kindness, patience, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control, are necessary to follow in the steps of Jesus.

Faith Formation Activities: Current activities, Bible lessons and sheer fun are sent to parents of church school children every week. If you would like your child's name to be added to the church school mailing list, please contact me.

Concerns: I encourage you to send along comments and concerns to meet the needs of our church school families, at this time.

To contact me: mjgibson@ccamherst.org or 603-234-2659



Confirmation Class of 2019-20

The CCAmherst 2019-20 Confirmation class is still meeting via Zoom, connecting with their mentors, going on faith visits, and discerning their path to church membership, proving more and more that even while the doors of the church are closed, the work of the church is carrying on! While this year's confirmands are completing their curriculum by the end of May, our confirmation leadership team has decided to move our confirmation celebration to the fall. This way, we can honor our confirmand's journey as it was meant to be celebrated—together, in person, with cake.



Kid's Check-in with Pastor Kate

Did you know that kids who have strong relationships with non-family adults have higher levels of positive support, engage in less risky behavior, and have increased levels of overall well-being? Kids can build these kinds of relationships in many different ways—through sports or music or school or even, you guessed it, church!

Every week, Pastor Kate is seeking to support our community's children through face-to-face, one-on-one or small group conversations over Zoom. Each week, these chats have a theme to start the conversation, and space to sharing feelings and thoughts about what is going on in our world.

Please reach out to Pastor Kate to sign your kid(s) up for these short conversations during this stay-at-home period. And, if your child would like to connect with other church school kids in a small group conversation, feel free to collaborate with other church school parents and pick a time together!

Prayerful Playgroup: Every Thursday at 1:30 p.m.

Prayerful Playgroup is still meeting every week! Join us every Thursday at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom to chat, vent, and connect with other parents of younger children who are all managing this new world of home schooling, social isolating, and family managing. If you have a friend who could use this place of connection, feel free to invite them to join us! Email pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information.



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11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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May