

VILLAGE SPIRE

June 2020



Worship
WITH US ONLINE

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 leave comments, download the bulletin and submit a prayer request. Then join us after worship at 11:00 a.m. for our ZOOM Coffee Hour! The link to coffee hour will be sent out via email.

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!

How Long?

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
June 2020

"How long, O Lord?" – Psalm 13:1

Psalm 13 is not the only place in our Bible where we find the phrase, "How long, O Lord?" We hear these words in multiple Psalms of lament, we hear it in the longing cries of Abraham and Job, we hear it spoken by Isaiah and Jeremiah and other prophets who followed in their wake, we hear it in the words of the disciples as they question Jesus about the coming of the Kingdom, and we find it in the Book of Revelation – the last book of our Bible, which serves as an epilogue to a story of a people and their Creator – a story which seems to hinge on the answer to the question, "How long, O Lord?" How long must we wait? How long until our prayers are answered? How long until this peaceable kingdom that Jesus spoke of becomes a reality for us all?

The "How long?" question we've been asking since March has been, "How long must we do this?" This social distancing, this staying at home, this taking extreme precautions outside the home, this praying and worrying and grieving when we think of the sick, and the dead, and the health care professionals and first responders who are in the thick of it all. Now, in early June, the "How long?" question has shifted a bit. Now we're asking, "How long until the beaches open?" "How long until I can get my hair cut?" "How long will this respite – this loosening of restrictions – last? Will we be doing this all over again in the fall?"

The primary question that is on the minds of many in our congregation is, "How long before we can worship and gather together again in-person?" Our Church Council met this week to discuss this very question, as the state of New Hampshire continues to open up in stages and has now said that churches may gather for worship at "40% capacity of their worship spaces" provided that necessary precautions are taken. But what are those necessary precautions? What would it look like for our church to worship together with those precautions in place? And, is this something that our congregation wants to do, knowing the risks, or should we continue to think of the most vulnerable among us and not gather until it is safe to do so?

Continued on page 3

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!

We Said YES! World Service Updates from the Pastoral Needs Assessment Study

We are often asked to fill out a survey. Do you ever wonder what happens next? Are your answers heard? Do they matter? Has anything changed? In the case of the Pastoral Needs Assessment Survey, offered to all CCA members last year, the answer is a resounding YES.

Many of you said that while the church donates to local, national, and international outreach efforts, you wanted more "hands-on" opportunities. The tremendous volunteer response to our community suppers was proof of that interest. The World Service team discovered many more ways for members to get involved in local projects.

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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
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pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

Rev. Katherine R. Kennedy
Associate Pastor
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Sara L. Phelps
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Marilyn Gibson
Church School Coordinator
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Our Time, Our Turn: Behind the Scenes



Despite the hurdles imposed by the COVID-19 virus, progress continues on two of the capital campaign projects: the kitchen renovation and the grant application to LCHIP (Land and Community Heritage Investment Program). Both these projects have required a great deal of time and effort from team members but are successfully moving forward, and we are very grateful to all involved.

Four unique conceptual drawings of kitchen layouts and designs were recently received from SMP Architects. The building team was pleased with the creativity and good ideas that were suggested and are in the process of reviewing and refining the options with SMP. Many thanks to Doug Topliffe (team lead), Charlie Vars, Alicia Wight, Jack Buben, John Swanson, Anne Krantz, Dick and Sue Stout, and Todd Whitney for all their work.

Barbara Williams has worked tirelessly on the LCHIP grant application. With the report from noted preservationist Steve Bedard in hand, she submitted the Intention to Apply form to LCHIP, which resulted in LCHIP inviting us to apply for a grant. The grant application will be finalized and sent in June. While the process has been long and complicated, hopefully it will result in a good-sized grant now and lay the foundation for future grants.

Our progress continues one (and sometimes two!) steps at a time. Thank you to all who have made these projects possible through your gifts of time and treasure.



Zoom Time

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 will continue to meet via ZOOM over the summer:

Small Group Ministry, Middle High Youth Group, Parent's Group, Sunday Coffee Hour, Woman's Association, and the Men's Group. We'll continue to do the "work" of the church as well as our Council, Deacons, Christian Education, World Service and Communications teams meet on Zoom. Pastor Kate will also continue her 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.

Email Spam

If you've received any suspicious looking emails from Pastor Maureen that say "I need to speak with you," or "Can you do something for me?" or "I have something discreet I'd like you to take care of," – please know that these are the work of scammers who've been targeting pastors and churches over the last few years. If you reply they will then ask you to buy gift cards or ask you to send money in some other way. Please do not reply! The good news is that neither Pastor Maureen's nor our church email has been hacked and our security has not been compromised. The scammers set up a "spoof" email account that looks similar to the real email address but is not the same, and they do so using information that is publically available. The bad news is that there isn't much we can do other than report the email as spam and forward it to the Federal Trade Commission at spam@uce.gov - and if you do so be sure to copy Andrea so we know the scammers are at it again.



How Long? continued from page 1

While some churches in NH have chosen to begin gathering this month, we are proceeding with caution just as we did when we made the decision to suspend our gatherings back in mid-March. Ultimately it will be up to all of us, as a congregation, to consider the precautions, think through the logistics, and decide whether gathering is possible or if other arrangements make more sense for us at this time. As we've found over the last few years with our pastoral transitions and our capital campaign, we work best when we explore all of our options and hear as many voices as possible in the course of our decision-making, while also being intentional to keep God in the conversation as well!

With this in mind, our Church Council will be appointing an ad hoc team to:

- Explore the steps we would need to take to reopen (including looking at the CDC guidelines and the recommendations from our NH UCC Conference);
- Put together a multi-stage plan for gradual reopening;
- Poll the congregation to see how our members feel about reopening and how many would attend an in-person worship given the precautions;
- Seek the input of our staff as they are impacted by the decision to resume worshiping, working, and gathering in the building;
- Make a recommendation to the congregation about the feasibility and plan for reopening;
- Present the findings, plan, and recommendation to Council and the congregation in early to mid-August.

Given the timeline, the earliest we would consider resuming in-person worship would be late August or early September. In the meantime, we're exploring the possibility of having small outdoor gatherings over the summer - Back Porch Theology or other adult ed sessions, SHARE drives, social distancing Levi Saturday, etc. Small groups or teams that would like to meet in-person will be encouraged to do so offsite at a member's home to reduce the traffic/risk of using the church building until a plan is in place to have it regularly sanitized. If you do need to use the building, please let our Council know so we have a sense of who is coming in and out of the building and what further precautions may need to be taken.

Admittedly, one of the driving concerns for many of us as our time apart continues is that our connection as a church community will diminish, and as a result the momentum we'd gained in our programs and ministries will be lost and the commitment many of us made with our time, talent, and treasure will wane. Thankfully, many of us have continued to seek connection through our online worship and in Zoom gatherings, and the work of our church continues with many of you still giving of yourselves in so many ways.

We all long to be together again, and we will be together again, one day. This pandemic will not last forever. We may lift up our voices and cry, "How long, O God?" but as we've seen with the spotlight shifting in the last few weeks to deep questions surrounding economic struggles, racial injustice and prophetic witness, there is much that we can do as a church, and as Christians, to respond to God's call outside the walls of our historic building. I continue to pray for all of you, for our congregation, for our community, for our nation, and for our world, as we move into a summer of continued uncertainty. In many ways, WE are the response to the cry of "How long, O God." As God's Spirit continues to move in and through us as we witness to the unending power and presence of God's love, compassion, mercy, justice, and grace.

Be safe and be well,

Pastor Maureen

Adult Ed Summer Series: Waking Up White



"In order to do better, we must be willing to hold our darkness to the light, we must be willing to shatter our own veneer of goodness."

—Ijeoma Oluo,
So You Want To Talk About Race

As Christians, we are called to love all of God's creation and resist the powers of evil and injustice in our midst. In the wake of the most recent public killings of black and brown Americans in our country, you may be wondering—what can I possibly do? Let's start by looking inward, and discovering how we have been shaped by the systems of oppression in our world.

Starting Thursday, June 25, join Pastor Kate for a new Adult Ed program on the book *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, by Debby Irving. For four weeks, from June 25 through July 16, we will dive into the challenging and important topic of racism and whiteness together.

Disclaimer: this is one of those book groups where you really do need to read the book! Let Pastor Kate know if you're having trouble obtaining a copy of the book.

Reach out to Pastor Kate with questions or to sign up for the group by June 22.



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!

These Days A Daily Devotional Booklet

Copies of *These Days*, a quarterly booklet of daily devotionals, are available through the church office. Thanks to an generous donor, our church maintains an annual subscription. If you'd like a one sent to you, please let Andrea in the office know.

SHARE Food Pantry

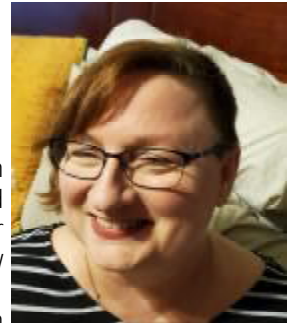
The SHARE Food Pantry continues to be busy. Please know your donations are needed and truly appreciated.



June
Pantry Requests:
canned fruit, flour,
sugar, boxed cake
mixes, baking
supplies, coffee, tea,
juice, granola

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!

Volunteer with a Capital "V" An Interview with Terri Behm by Sue Spiess



When Terri Behm was looking for a new church community, her husband, Ken D'Ambrosio, suggested they visit the Congregational Church of Amherst. Their first visit, with daughter Bella, happened to be on a Rally Sunday.

"It was a great day to try it out," Terri recalls, with families picnicking on the green after church. She saw women "having an equal role," as Pastor Maureen and women deacons were fully partnered in the church leadership. Raised in a very conservative and religious home, Terri re-examined what she had been taught and knew that it was important to her that her church aligned with her adult beliefs. She and her family found a home at CCA.

Terri is a technical writer at a wireless technology startup, but her passion is community service. She attended Council meetings representing the World Service committee before she was officially a congregation member, and she has chaired World Service for several years now. The idea of a community supper had been percolating before she joined; however, Terri and the committee implemented suppers. She says they have a "lovely sense of camaraderie." In addition, they began annual Mission Sundays and have greatly increased their local outreach projects, detailed in the World Service update included in this month's *Spire*.

Foster care has become a special interest for Terri. She became a Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) this winter. CCA already had a connection to Bethany Christian Services, as our congregation donates gift cards that they distribute to older foster children at Christmas. Terri contacted Cynthia Thomas at Bethany Christian and asked what else we could do. The "kitchen kits" for young adults was the first extended project for World Service, followed by collecting household items for foster families that are now stored in the donated MI-BOX located at the Black Forest Café.

Terri's volunteer spirit includes the greater Amherst community as well. She serves on the board of Maker Space, where volunteers have made and donated more than 1,300 N95-type masks and 3,500 ear relief bands that make over-the-ear masks more comfortable. She is also a second-term member of the Amherst School Board, revived Destination Imagination for Amherst youth, and spearheaded the Citizens in School initiative which reaches out to community members who do not have children in the school system. Terri is a community representative on the Souhegan Community Council, Fourth of July committee member, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) member, Star Island Corporation member, and incoming president of the Amherst Junior Women's Club.

Service runs in the family. Her older daughter, Brittainy, is a teacher. Terri says Ken "makes all her craziness possible and is the most willing volunteer ever." Truly, Terri Behm is a Volunteer with a capital "V," and the church and the community are the beneficiaries of her dedication.



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.

We Said YES! continued from page 1

Our church members have volunteered at two Build Days for Habitat for Humanity. CCA has always gathered Christmas gifts for SHARE and Crestwood Nursing Home, and gift cards for Bethany Christian Services. What many may not know is that for the past four years, we have also supported the families of Anne-Marie House. Terri Behm and Nancy Protzmann shopped and wrapped gifts for the children, and the World Service team and Santa and Mrs. Claus (AKA Gene Heighton and Joan Lyons) paid the children a visit during their annual Christmas party. Nadine Obermiller of World Service and the Deacons suggested a "drive-by" SHARE food drive. On May 22 and 23, the teams accepted donations from church and community members and filled two vehicles with food staples. Members of the World Service team coordinated with the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, for a Build Day to bring together members of the congregation to build bunk beds for foster children. Currently on hold, it will happen when virus restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

This next outreach project is truly a story of "it takes a village." Late last year, we partnered with Bethany Christian Services, a national nonprofit which supports vulnerable kids and families here and abroad. Terri Behm contacted Cynthia Thomas at Bethany Christian to see what opportunities were available. Through the Community and Faith-based Initiative, Bethany Christian works with the NH Division of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) to help foster families. One opportunity involved helping young adults transitioning out of the foster care system and setting up housekeeping for the first time. With very few resources, the youth are in need of basic supplies. World Service used mission funds to purchase items to create 15 new "kitchen kits" and gift cards for dishes, stored in plastic tubs for easy storage and delivery. Two tubs have been delivered so far to youth starting out on their own.

Storing the extra tubs presented the next problem and opportunity. Terri reached out to Ed Smith and Cathy Putnam of College Bound Movers, and they offered an MI-BOX storage unit free of charge if a visible location could be found. Jamie Arsenault at the Black Forest Café enthusiastically agreed, and the MI-BOX is now located in their parking lot.

In the meantime, Susan Holden began collecting donations for foster families, stored in the MI-BOX until needed. If you have such items in good condition that you would like to donate, contact storage coordinators Susan and Don Holden directly (603-566-2394 or bagnara-thornton@comcast.net). Please do not drop anything off at the MI-BOX storage unit!

YES, the World Service team has found many opportunities for "hands-on" outreach projects and has found partners in the community. CCA, Bethany Christian Services, DCYF, College Bound Movers/MI-BOX, and the Black Forest Café have all worked together, volunteering their time and their resources to help those in need of the basics. The community has donated the equipment and supplies.

Team members Terri Behm, Susan Holden, Bruce Manchester, Carolyn Mitchell, Karen Stowe, Nadine Obermiller, Nancy Protzmann and Craig Richardson are always open to more ideas!



Celebrate Church School

June 7 marks the end of our spring term, as well as being in class through zoom.

We give thanks to our devoted teachers: Rebekah Bolin, Gretchen Davis, Dave Hagerstrom, Leona Hendrickson, Nadine Obermiller, Larissa Riley, Heather Stone, Marianne Stone and Sue Werst.

We give thanks to Pastor Maureen and Pastor Kate, as well as parents and church teams who gave needed support.

CCA Facebook is where church school will be during the summer months. Share your experiences and ideas with us.

Our summer term is being presented in a different form. We are inviting all to join the free VBS offered by the UCC Horton center.

<https://hortoncenter.org/hc-home/> and

<https://youtu.be/dsBEQJqYJLk>

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



Prayerful Playgroup is still meeting every week throughout the summer! 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 social distancing. 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.

Kid's Check-ins: Summer Addition



School is out, but church is not! And we here at CCAmherst know that this summer will be different than all the rest. We are still here to support you and your family during this unique time as we all navigate the changing rules of social distancing.

This summer we will continue the Kid's Check-In program that we started this spring. On a bi-weekly basis, Pastor Kate will invite our community's children to 20-30 minute chats. As usual, these conversations will have a faith-based theme, and leave plenty of space to share feelings and thoughts about what is going on in our world.

Please reach out to Pastor Kate to sign your kid(s) up! And, if your child would like to connect with other church school kids, feel free to collaborate with other church school parents and pick a time together!

Middle High Youth Group: Summer Addition

Happy Summer! MHYG met every third Wednesday of the month throughout the spring, and this group of fifth to seventh graders had so much fun getting to know one another that the MHYG advisors thought, "Why stop now?"

This summer, MHYG will meet on July 15 and August 19 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. for social distance fun, fellowship and a bit of faith formation too! Check your email for more information about social distance guidelines that will make sure we're all safe as we start to gather in body and spirit. And as always, friends are welcome to join in the fun!

Email pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information.

Director of Music 2020

My earliest church memories are of music and singing in the choir. I was raised in Cumberland, Rhode Island where I attended The Four Corners Community Chapel, UCC. Our family was involved in the many aspects of church life including Trustees and Fellowship, and my father chaired the annual Stewardship campaign for many years. He also led the choir with his beautiful voice, commitment, humor and talent. Worship and music went hand in hand, and I have realized over the years that this foundation has led me in a spiritual direction that would stay with me forever.

I remember my dad expressing such joy when we found our church home in Amherst, New Hampshire almost 30 years ago. He was happy that we joined this thriving church community, and was thrilled that I would be on the music staff. I continue to be blessed with life long friendships, loving support from our congregation, a spectacular meetinghouse, and colleagues that amaze me every day with their dedication, intelligence, compassion and talent.

Fast forward to 2020.

In the midst of this pandemic, there are challenges as to how we include music in our new format for worship. Without the possibility of a choir rehearsing and singing together we have had to rely on technology and creativity. Michael Havay has been recording his organ music from home, we have used previous recordings of the current Chancel Choir and Bell Choir, and Wendy Valeri and I are recording solos as well. I am looking for more ways in which we can lift our spirits with music by using recordings from musicians who have the ability to tape at home. This will be ongoing.

OneLicense offers free use of music from dozens of publishers. I am filling out a weekly report online that gets reviewed and anything that is public domain need not be reported.

Who knows how long this will continue, and when our musicians will be able to safely gather to rehearse and provide music for worship in the traditional sense. It has been necessary over the past two months for me to go into church for music and check on instruments. It is as if everything is frozen in time. It was mid-March. We were busy preparing music for Lent and Easter. The Chancel Choir folders were filled with dozens of anthems, the Bell Choir was rehearsing music for Easter. There was such energy! The Youth Choir had begun to grow again and the kids were looking forward to singing in church. I miss everyone terribly, the fellowship and joy of working together to prepare music is one of the greatest joys of my life.

It has been a challenge for the music staff and musicians as we all feel this loss. Everything is different now. We cannot make music together—yet. What remains the same is our faith in God, our hope that we will be together soon and the love that we have for each other. In closing, let's keep that foremost in our minds.

Blessings to all,
Sara Phelps, Director of Music



Eva Upham’s Photo of the Church Interior

Anne Krantz, Historian

The photo of the church sanctuary (top) is an enlargement of a tiny 2" x 3" snapshot taken on March 18, 1950. On the back is written, "Miss Flores from Eva Upham 1977."

This was the interior that James Towne had installed in 1902, and with very few modifications remained until the photo date. It is the only photo we have that shows a side window. As explained in the November 2019 *Spire* article, James Towne moved from Amherst to New Jersey, but maintained strong ties to Amherst and our church. He paid to have the dated Victorian gothic décor replaced with the new 1902 look.

Queen Victoria died Jan. 22, 1901, and it seems the interior decorators couldn't wait to erase her influence in architecture and interior design. Mr. Towne and his New York decorators totally replaced the existing Victorian décor. Out went the pointed back chancel chairs, replaced with rounded back chairs, plus furniture with lots of fluted columns, new wainscoting, oak pews, lots of red plush carpeting, and hints of Egyptian design on the painted ceiling cove. What looks to us today like the height of an eclectic mishmash of design influences was raved about in the November 13, 1902 *Cabinet* as "an elegant appearing place of worship to compare to any newly constructed church in the state."

The 1916 postcard photo of the pulpit shows the original 1902 chancel wall decorative recessed arch behind the pulpit with the weird flying cross. By March 1950, the arch had been simplified and stripped of the border decoration and the cross.

The side windows had a vertical post down the middle, dividing each into two long glass windows for a more Victorian look. The cut into the windowsill for this post was filled with a piece of wood when the windows were replaced in 1958. This repair can be seen today in the center of the sills. Elizabeth Bean gave the new replacement windows in memory of her husband Norwin.

The photo seems to show simple sheer curtains hanging from the top inside the window frame. The shutters, which must date to the 1958 windows, are a 1950s Colonial revival interpretation.

By 1950 members' tastes differed from Towne's modern ideas of 1902 (*A Sleeping Town Awakens*, pg. 39). We can be grateful to the devoted church members back then who raised funds to renovate the sanctuary (re-dedication service was in November 1950) to a classic décor in keeping with the original 1771 exterior of our historic meetinghouse.



Financial Summary (as of April 30, 2020)



	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$357,172	\$345,391	\$11,781
Expenses	\$355,090	\$360,338	\$(5,248)
Net Income	\$ 2,082	\$(14,947)	\$17,029

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: Keith Lammers, Paul Spiess, Doug Topliffe, Todd Whitney and Tim Wiegand (Treasurer).

The Congregational Church
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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