

VILLAGE SPIRE

October 2020



What's the Plan?

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
October 2020

BE THE CHURCH
Protect the environment.
Care for the poor.
FORGIVE OFTEN.
REJECT RACISM.
Fight for the powerless.
Share earthly and spiritual resources.
EMBRACE DIVERSITY.
LOVE GOD.
Enjoy this life.

Creative Worship

Sunday, October 18
10:00 a.m.

Care for the Poor

Mark your calendars! Creative Worship happens on the THIRD SUNDAY of every month. We'll come together as the community of Christ to worship God with special music, interactive liturgy, an engaging message, and a focus theme to frame our worship.

This year our overarching theme is BE THE CHURCH – the bold statements issued by the United Church of Christ to inspire us to live our faith in the world. In October, our worship theme is "Care for the Poor." This will coincide with our annual Mission Sunday where we lift up the many ways that we serve our neighbors near and far. We hope you can join us online!

It's been eight long months since we last worshiped in our sanctuary. When we departed worship on that Sunday in early March we left wondering if we would still be apart on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday. Our pastors, staff and lay leaders were also left wondering how we would even begin to move those beloved services online – without the palms and lilies, without our choirs and organ, without all of YOU. But if you recall the CAT (Congregational Assessment Tool) survey we participated in last year - the one that designated our congregation as being "High Energy, High Satisfaction, Flexible and Transformational," then it may be no surprise that together we seamlessly pivoted into being a "virtual" church – moving worship and all of our meetings, classes, groups, and work of the church online. I hesitate to talk about our "reopening" at this point because we never really closed! Our building may have been standing quiet, but we have not.

Yet, here we are once again, anticipating a major event in our Christian year – Advent and Christmas – and wondering if we'll be celebrating this beloved season virtually as well. The best answer I can give you at this point is a cautious "God, I hope not," along with a more hopeful "We have a plan!" As I write this in early October, our ad-hoc Reopening Team has set a date of November 15 as the target date for in-person worship in our sanctuary. This will give us a few Sundays before the start of Advent to work through our logistics for safely gathering in the sanctuary and allow us to see how it plays out in practice. This plan could change, should we see an increase in the virus in our area or if the state of New Hampshire reinstates restrictions in the coming months. The bottom line is: if, or when, we gather on November 15, worship will look different from how it did when we last gathered in March.

Shorter service, less music: For some, a shorter service may be "music to your ears" (finally, you say!) but in this case we're seeking to limit our time indoors to about 35-40 minutes. We'll have time for the scripture, sermon, and spoken and silent prayer. Sadly, we won't be singing and neither will our choir, but we will have a mix of live and recorded music.

Worship leaders: Our pastors won't be greeting folks in the pews or at the doors, and we'll be preaching and speaking from behind plexiglass screens on the pulpit and lectern. This will allow us to preach without masks to assist those who rely on facial expressions and lip reading in their ability to hear.

Limited seating: To maintain social distancing, attendance at worship will be limited to 50 people. We will not be opening the balcony due to concerns about overall airflow and the narrow stairwells. Ushers will seat each person or family group upon arrival, and dismiss groups row by row at the end of the service. During Advent we may require folks to sign up for worship ahead of time if we anticipate having over 50. We will plan on multiple Christmas services if needed.

Screening: Attendees will be asked to fill out a screening/contact form so we'll know who is present should an issue arise. Temperatures will be taken upon entrance (touchless), and hand sanitizer machines are at each door. Please allow extra time for this process. Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early!

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.

Church school 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 available Monday–Friday,
from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Send in all news by the
fifteenth 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
pastorkate@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@ccamherst.org

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

Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Wendy Valeri
Bell Choir Director
wendylazott@tds.net

Marilyn Gibson
Church School Coordinator
mjgibson@ccamherst.org



What is Small Group Ministry?

Small Group Ministry is where 8-10 people meet with the intention of establishing deeper connections with each other and with God.

The groups meet once a month from October to June, and are led by lay members of the congregation.

The group meetings run 1.5 hours and include a check-in, a short topic reading, discussion of the topic, and closing prayer.

We have a weekday group, an evening group, and a weekend group to allow members to pick a time that best fits their schedule.

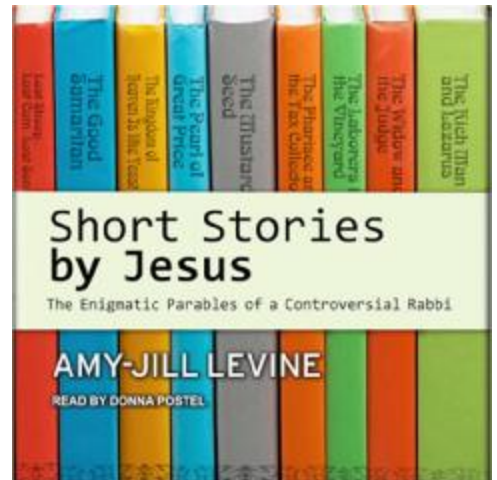
This year we're focusing on
Short Stories by Jesus

Using the book by Amy-Jill Levine as a guide, we'll explore the parables of Jesus and the many ways they have to guide, comfort, inspire, provoke, and change us!

There's no need to purchase the book and no prep-time is needed! The readings and discussion questions for each month will be emailed ahead of time and are short enough to be read when the group is gathered.

Schedule for 2020-2021

- October: The Good Samaritan
- November: The Rich Man
- December: The Persistent Widow
- January: The Laborers in the Vineyard
- February: The Talents
- March: The Prodigal Son
- April: The Sower
- May: The Mustard Seed
- June: The Lost Sheep



Choose a Group!

- First Tuesday 1:30–3:00 p.m.
- Second Wednesday 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- First Sunday 12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

All groups will meet on Zoom in October. Plans for in-person meetings may be arranged after that point if possible!

How To Get Involved

You may join a group at any time of the year as long as your choice is still open. Each group is limited to ten members.

Sign up online at ccamherst.org or contact Pastor Maureen at 603-673-3231 x11
pastormaureen@ccamherst.org



What's the Plan?, continued from page 1

Face coverings: Masks that cover the nose and mouth securely will be required of all attendees, and must be worn through the entire service and in all locations in the building. We recognize that this has become a charged issue for some. We have consulted with physicians who remind us that this is the most important step to reducing the spread of the virus. This is how we put our "love of neighbor" into practice.

Touch points: We will need to re-imagine some of the usual elements of our service – reciting communal prayers, the Passing of the Peace, passing friendship registers, passing the offering plate, serving communion. We'll have alternative ways for some of these elements, and others will be put on hold (like Fellowship Hour) until it's safe to resume.

Children: At this time there is no plan to have in-person Sunday school or nursery coverage, and there won't be a Children's Time during the in-person service. Many of our parents have indicated with their children attending in-person classes at school they're limiting their exposure to other groups, especially to children attending other schools. We will continue to offer parents the option to pick up our "Brown Bag Church School Lessons" to do at home, as well as provide weekly Zoom check-ins with our church school children.

Online worship: If you're not ready to return to in-person worship, or if you plan to space out your Sunday attendance, be rest assured that we will continue to offer the same online recorded service that we've been offering, with music, hymns, a Children's Time, scripture, sermon and prayers. Yes, this is extra work for the pastors and staff; but it's important to us that we continue to reach those who are unable to be with us in person, and "live streaming" the shortened, music-less service from the sanctuary doesn't feel like an acceptable alternative at the moment!

Our plan all along has been to not rush our return to in-person worship, but to watch how the virus was responding in our community, to take time to put all the necessary precautions in place, and to take into consideration what many of you have shared with us both in our recent congregational survey and in passing. You want to be back. Some are ready to be back. Most are unsure, or wish to wait until it's safer. But for those who are ready to be back, we hear you. Worship for you is about more than the music and the other elements that may be missing. Worship for you is about the people you worship with and the space you worship in. It's about relationships, and social interactions, and being in the same space with others as you commune with God.

We all long to experience the presence of God in community once again. We've seen that presence in action over the last eight months in the many things we've accomplished as a church, despite our being physically apart. But to sit in the pews of our 246-year-old sanctuary, listening to the clock tick and the floors creak, watching the seasons change outside the window, seeing the faces of those we've been missing and hearing them say, "How have you been? I've missed you, too!" That's something we all long to experience once again. May it be so. Soon.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen

Reopening Information

Our ad hoc Reopening Team has been hard at work thinking through and putting in place plans for our congregation to regather in person for worship and small group meetings.

Are you curious where things stand? Through the members section on our website, we have a page dedicated to communicating with our church family on both current policies and procedures for use of the building during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the progress of our ad hoc Reopening Team. Documents will be posted as they are made available. If you have any questions or concerns about any of this information, please reach out to any member of the team: Pastor Maureen Frescott, Jessica Greer, Pastor Kate Kennedy, Keith Lammers, Susan Manchester, Kathy Skoglund, Paul Spiess, Kate Thompson, Doug Topliffe, Sue Werst, Tom Werst.

Online Access to Weekly Bulletin

If you would like to download or print the weekly Sunday bulletin prior to the sermon, you can view it here on the website prior to watching the sermon. It is available the Friday afternoon prior to the Sunday online worship. <https://www.ccamherst.org/weekly-bulletin/>



End 68 Hours of Hunger

End 68 Hours of Hunger is now working with very small groups of volunteers to continue their important work of packaging and providing food bags for students. If you are interested in this hands-on mission opportunity, please reach out to Nancy Protzmann (uvmcats84@gmail.com or 603-321-7099) for more details on how you can help.

SHARE Food Pantry

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



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

Donations should be brought directly to the SHARE Center in Milford. Thank you for your continuous support!

Prayerful Playgroup

Since the start of COVID-19, the CCAmherst Parents Group has continued to meet throughout the summer on Zoom! This group for parents with young children meets every Thursday afternoon at 2:30 on Zoom. Check the member page for our Zoom link and password!

Each week, Prayerful Playgroup offers a space for parents to check-in, talk about the joys and trials of parenthood, and grow in faith. All are welcome to join this group that seeks 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.”

Adult Ed Series

A NEW Look at the OLD Testament

Wednesdays, October 7
and October 21
10:00—11:30 a.m. on Zoom



Is the OLD Testament still relevant today? Who wrote it and why? From the Creation story to the Exodus, the stories of the great Kings and Judges, the writing of the prophets, the poetry of the Psalms, the wisdom of Proverbs, and the suffering of Job, the Old Testament is familiar yet mysterious to many of us. We’ll take a NEW look at the OLD Testament through this 2019 video lecture series produced by the Great Courses. These dynamic lectures, given by Robert D. Miller II, Professor of Old Testament at The Catholic University of America, give us a new look at this seminal text with a fresh perspective, rich visual aids and fascinating examination of the original context, shedding light on one of the world’s most beloved books.

We’ll watch the video together as a group and then have a discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. This series has 24 episodes, which we’ll watch from October to June, meeting every first and third Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. We’ll meet on Zoom in the fall and move to meeting in-person at the church if possible at a later date. All are welcome! Please RSVP to pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the Members Section under “Wednesday Adult Ed”

A New Look at the Old Testament - Series Schedule

October 7	<i>The Old Testament as Literature and The Creation Story</i>
October 21	<i>Adam and Eve and When Things Go Wrong in the Garden of Eden</i>
November 4	<i>Abraham: The Father of Three Faiths</i>
November 18	<i>Moses and The Exodus</i>
December 2	<i>The Ten Commandments</i>
December 16	<i>The Covenant Code in Exodus and Leviticus at a Crossroads</i>
January 6	<i>Deuteronomy to Kings</i>
January 20	<i>The Book of Judges and The Books of Samuel</i>
February 3	<i>The Books of Kings</i>
February 17	<i>Biblical Short Stories: Ruth and Esther</i>
March 3	<i>Amos: Prophet of Justice and The Prophet Isaiah</i>
March 17	<i>Jeremiah: Persecuted Prophet</i>
April 7	<i>The Book of Daniel and Apocalyptic Literature</i>
April 21	<i>The Study of the Psalms and The Music of the Psalms</i>
May 5	<i>Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and Ecclesiastes</i>
May 19	<i>Job’s Suffering and Understanding</i>
June 2	<i>Slaying the Dragons of the Old Testament</i>



Behind the Scenes at CCA Music Ministry: Sara Phelps

By Jeanne Neverisky



Sara Phelps, left

Jeanne Neverisky, right

Sara Phelps has been on the music staff at CCA for almost 30 years, preparing music for worship, leading the choir and working with many musicians and staff over this time. Currently Director of Music, she feels blessed to be part of this vibrant church community! And to have the joy of working with an outstanding music staff.

Before the pandemic, many of her tasks were done in person, with a six-week view of the church calendar. So much has changed since the pandemic began over six months ago! Each of our music staff has stepped up to the challenge -- and our music has continued to inspire through the efforts of Sara, Michael Havay, Organist, Wendy Valeri as Bell Choir Director, and talented musicians from our congregation.

You may be surprised to realize that Michael, organist and accompanist to the music program here at CCA, records his music on a keyboard at home with technology available to add effects... and somehow makes it sound like he is playing in our sanctuary! When he accompanies Wendy on bells, he plays the initial track, sends it to Wendy, then she can record over his track. She's able to use video at the same time so we get to see it.

Sara freely admits that she is not a tech-oriented person but is rising to the challenge to deliver online singing, recording and editing with a little support from her husband Dave. Most recordings are taped remotely and then edited. Sometimes Sara and Michael meet in the sanctuary, but sing and play about 20 feet apart. Working with the pastors and staff over the past several months in the spiritual and creative aspects has been wonderful, but Sara says she misses the rehearsals with the Chancel Choir and, of course singing on Sunday mornings. She understands that choir members very much miss being integrated in the Sunday church service and the connection they enjoy from that experience.

With the recent addition of hymns, and the potential of a Chancel Choir "virtual" recording (our choir members singing individual parts at home and then carefully mixing it to make it sound like they are all together), Sara is hoping to continue the music ministry in a meaningful way for the musicians as well as the congregation. That virtual technique is not as easy as it may look! Editing audio files and synchronizing digitally is daunting to anyone just learning the skills. (May God's peace be with you all!) We all enjoy seeing and hearing the children sing, and Sara is hoping to have a children's choir recording for an ongoing service in the future.

Stay "tuned" as we work through both the challenges and enjoy the new opportunities of this time!



Thank You Pastor Maureen and Pastor Kate! Rally Sunday was transformed through the graces and talents of our pastors. Through the magic of electronics, we have continued to *Be the Church* as a family. Through all ministries WE ARE THE CHURCH.

Church School is a ministry, commanded by God. Ministry is using whatever God gave to you to serve others out of love. Matthew 28:20 "...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sign up for Brown Bag Lessons: Go to our church website <https://www.ccamherst.org/> and click on Learn, Grade PreK-7 to record your family name. Comments should contain your email address.



Church school's October mission will be serving our neighbors through the Heifer Organization. The Sunday bulletin will provide more information.

Backpack Tag: This year's backpack tag is available for download through our website: <https://www.ccamherst.org/church-school/>. Attach one to all your children's bags. This year's theme, *Be The Church*, is on there, along with a special blessing.

WA Virtual Holiday Fair Auction

Due to COVID-19, the Woman's Association will not be able to hold its annual Holiday Fair this year. But we are excited to offer in its place an online Virtual Holiday Fair Auction, which will take place in November. Look for more auction details which will be coming soon.

The Church on the Common

Anne Krantz, Historian

Although the church was 'evicted' from the town-owned common in 1836, its new location facing south towards the common turned out to be a huge visual benefit for both the church and the town steeple. The church attained a stately and commanding presence overlooking the vast, and at the time, open field, and the steeple, the clock tower and belfry, were more visible on Church Street.

The church was now tucked between houses on each side. The Parkins house was on the east side, and the stately Jonathan Smith house was on the west side, between the church and the present parsonage. Dr. George Moor bought the Smith house in 1844 and added his doctor's office between his big house and the meetinghouse. When Dr. Moor died in 1866, the house was sold and moved east along Church Street to the corner of Middle Street (now 15 Church St.), creating the lovely lawn between the church and the parsonage.

The following history about aspects of the common is adapted from the original nomination document for *National Register of Historic Places 1982*, that former member Ruth Whaland helped research and write.

"Amherst's sizeable Town Common anchors the small village. Encircled by a fence in 1866, the Common was dedicated as a park in 1868."

The original town settlement was centered around the first meetinghouse, built in 1749 on the hill at the intersection of Mack Hill Road and Jones Road. A granite marker and plaque designate the site. The area was known as "Upper Flanders." During the French and Indian Wars (1756-1763) Amherst was strategically located about midway on the overland routes that converged in Amherst, at the broad level area one-half mile to the south of Upper Flanders known as "The Plains," the location of the town common grazing lands.

Secomb explains that the inhabitants of Souhegan West had petitioned Governor Wentworth in 1753 to become incorporated as a town.

Later, in 1760 the citizens received a charter from King George II and signed by Governor Benning Wentworth, with its new name, Amherst. The choice of Amherst as shire town of Hillsborough County came nine years after. Amherst was the county seat where the courts of law were held and where the records were kept. It also had the county jail for convicted prisoners and the gallows for hangings. [pg. 47]

"To accommodate the expected growth, a new town center was laid out on the Plains about 1755 and the village developed around the Big Common and along the eight roads which radiated therefrom." The second meetinghouse, our present church, was built on the "Big Common" beginning in 1771 – dedicated January 1774. The original first meetinghouse was moved from Upper Flanders in 1789 to become the First County Courthouse, until it burned a few years later.

Amherst was the shire town for the next hundred years (1760-1860) and prospered as the principal center of law, transportation, agriculture and commerce in south central New Hampshire. It remained the only shire town until 1792. The annual term of the Superior Court continued to be held in Amherst until 1879, giving the town eleven decades as a shire town.

Agricultural fairs were held annually on the Amherst Big Common, from revolutionary times to the Civil War. These fairs were advertised extensively throughout New England and were attended by farmers, peddlers and others from throughout the region. An original broadside for one of these fairs is prominently displayed in Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts. [Adapted from a copy of the original nomination document for National Register of Historic Places 1982 https://www.livingplaces.com/NH/Hillsborough_County/Amherst_Town/Amherst_Village_Historic_District.html]

Amazingly, the second meetinghouse found itself at the crossroads of two major New Hampshire roads, the north-south Boston Post Road, and the east-west Route 101, that back in that time ran right through the village in front of town hall. Good transportation routes were a huge factor in Amherst's early robust growth that impacted the church's early success. Amherst population peaked in 1790 at 2,639, declined until 1810 to 1,554, and did not reach the 1790 population again until the mid-1960s.

Bob Rowe and Bill Veillette, in their comprehensive book *Amherst Historical Moments*, in the chapter *The First Independence Day*, include this great photo of the common in 1870s:

A view of the large common as it appeared circa 1870. In 1866, the fence around the common was planned, and the following spring it was planted with trees. In Victorian fashion, the Plain had been converted to "the Park" and would never again serve as a field for militia musters, cattle drives or fairs.

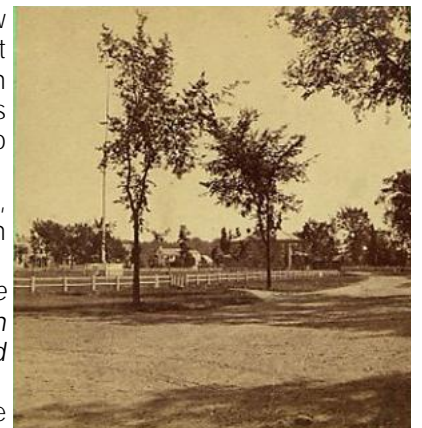
A later postcard shows the trees took over, reducing the view of the church from the south. It was virtually bursting with trees for a while until Dutch elm disease arrived.

The tree committee formed in 1952, was charged with the hopeless job of fighting the disease that attacked the trees on all the commons and along the road sides.

See also: <http://freedomsway.org/amherst-nh-town-common/>



Map of Amherst 1858



Capital Campaign in the Time of COVID-19

COVID-19 has slowed them down, but not stopped the Capital Campaign team from continuing their work. Here is the latest update, as of mid-September:

- The electrical work is continuing. All emergency lighting and exit signs were replaced, and a number of other small items have been addressed.
- Notification from LCHIP should be received by October 23. The LCHIP representatives who conducted a site assessment were impressed with the parsonage renovations and the sanctuary. However, there have been many more LCHIP applications this year, so we will hope and pray that our request for funds is granted!
- The completed architect drawings for the kitchen renovation have been received. The team is definitely pleased with the good ideas and suggestions the architect brought to the design process. The team is currently in the process of putting together a request for proposals (RFP) package that contractors will ultimately use to provide CCA with competitive pricing. The building team hopes to present kitchen design and cost information to the congregation later in the fall.

Campaign pledge funds continued to be received over the summer. THANKS to all for your continued generosity and support!

What Was the Link?

Many of our programs are taking place virtually these days. To help you keep track, the members section of our website now has a list of recurring meetings with their Zoom links and passwords. Meetings scheduled as one-time are not found here, but recurring group meetings such as virtual coffee hour, Woman's Association, Church Council, Prayerful Playgroup, etc. are all here.



Please note that passwords are now required for all meetings. If you are no longer able to access a meeting, please check this list for an updated link or password.

If you haven't yet signed up for access to the members section, it's easy to do and you'll have access to our other interesting "clicks," like our church school blog, our photo galleries, our SOS needs, and more. Sign up today at ccamherst.org.

Middle High Youth Group 5-8th Graders

HEY, Middle High Youth Groupers! MHYG meets the third Wednesday of every month, and YOU'RE invited!! Our next MHYG meeting is October 21.

This month, fall is our theme! Falling leaves, fall-y pumpkins, and falling in and out of friendships. Come join the fun and have a great spiritual conversation too!

At a time in life when most tweens are struggling to figure out who they are, what they like, who to be friends with, and what to believe, MHYG is a sacred space to explore spirituality, form deep relationships, and have fun through fellowship, games, check-ins, and sanctuary time.

ALL 5-8th graders are invited—whether or not they attend CCAMherst! MHYG kids are always welcome to bring friends.

Email Pastor Kate for more information.

Senior High Youth Group 9-12th Graders

HEY, Senior High Youth Groupers! October is here! SHYG meets *almost* every Sunday from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. We are meeting in person, using all of our best social distance practices, to stay safe and connected for as long as we can. Come to SHYG, and bring a friend!

Here is our SHYG October schedule.

- Oct. 4 Regular SHYG Meeting—
Mission Trip discussion!
- Oct. 11 No Meeting—
Indigenous People's Day
- Oct. 18 Regular SHYG Meeting
- Oct. 25 SHYG Meeting—
Pumpkin Carving!
- Nov 1 No Meeting—Kate away.
Enjoy Halloween!

Questions? Concerns? Get in touch with Pastor Kate by email or text.

Financial Summary

(as of August 31, 2020)



	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$151,913	\$108,707	\$ 43,206
Expenses	\$ 87,391	\$ 97,817	\$(10,426)
Net Income	\$ 64,522	\$ 10,889	\$ 53,632

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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