

VILLAGE SPIRE

January 2021



SHYG Spaghetti Supper and Variety Show



Hear ye, hear ye!

Come one, come all to the annual SHYG Spaghetti Supper and Variety Show, now, for the first time ever, broadcast live on February 13 for your at-home entertainment and delight!

This year, the very popular Senior High Youth Group Spaghetti Supper will be a virtual event! In honor of Valentine's Day, the theme of this year's show is Love, and it's time to get our "acts" together. The SHYG is seeking pre-recorded acts from church members and friends to fill the show with joy and laughter. All acts welcome!

Traditional acts are always a pleasure—we're looking at you, dancers, singers, hula-hoopers. But since we are virtual this year, the sky's the limit! Do you have a pet dog? Send us a video of your best buddy's best trick. Does your cat sing to the moon? Share her melodious tunes! Snow boarders who flip, home cooks that whip, close-up magicians, pots and pans musicians—let's milk this new virtual medium for all it's worth.

If you have an act you'd like to submit, send a note to pastorkate@ccamherst.org. Stay tuned for more details regarding the SHYG's plans for the spaghetti supper!

Happy NEW Year

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
January 2021

It felt good to write "2021" at the top of this page. I don't know about you, but it feels good to write 2021 on checks, on documents, in emails. It feels good just to say it. I've grown weary of saying "2020" – because it's no longer just a designation of 365 days of time, it's a statement about all that we've experienced over the last nine months. Whenever we encountered something unexpected, or challenging, or perplexing, we may have said, "That is so 2020." Whether it's reports of murder hornets, or metal monoliths appearing in remote locations, or political posturing, or conspiracy theories masquerading as genuine news, not a day went by seemingly where we didn't shake our heads in disbelief or amazement. I would add "frustration" and "despair" to that list as well.

Now we've turned the page into a new calendar year. Yet we may not be feeling the same excitement or hopefulness that we usually feel when we do so. There may not be a sense of wiping the slate clean, or starting anew, or leaving what is unproductive or burdensome behind to make room for what is life giving and life changing. We may not be feeling that sense of "turning over a new leaf" because many of the challenges of this past year are still with us. COVID-19 numbers are still rising, we're still donning our masks whenever we leave the house, our kids are still learning remotely, we still may not be able to visit with our extended families, and our congregation is still doing its work and worshiping from afar.

But as we emerge from the season of Christmas, the season of hope, and move into the season of Epiphany, the season of light and revelation, there is much about this new year that is hopeful and light bearing. Several effective

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Church School

Be The Church—Reject Racism: Church School presents January's lessons bringing the message of rejecting racism through God's promise, a gift to mankind. The birth of Jesus brings hope of a world where we all live in peace.

January's brown bag lessons are created by Sue Werst and delivered by Vicky Leknes. When you recorded your family in SignUpGenius, or you would like to, <https://www.ccamherst.org/>, the lessons are created for your family.

Thank you to all for the Church School Christmas Pageant! We are blessed with Pastor Kate for leading this year's virtual pageant. Thanks go out to the church school families and friends for their participation. We give thanks to God for their bountiful time, skills and energy, creating the Christmas story.



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 lessons available.

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Office Phone (603) 673-3231,
(603) 673-6848
www.ccamherst.org
[Facebook.com/ccamherst](https://www.facebook.com/ccamherst)

The church office is available
by phone and email 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
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mjgibson@ccamherst.org



1945 Winter Photo

Anne Krantz, Historian

This unusual winter photo shows the back of the church in the mid-1940s, before the community building was added. The photo was taken from Charlie Duval's house (now the Fishers') on Jail House Road looking west. The dark shed on the drive that leads to the back of church, is the last of the church horse sheds. Look carefully at the back of the church and you can see the original porch or bump-out on the back that contained stairs to the old east balcony of the meetinghouse. Notice also the old chimney, and maybe other horse sheds.

Charlie died in June 2020 at the age of 91. Amazingly, I called him about six months ago to learn more about the photo. He explained that it is his car behind the snow banks. He got it after he returned from the war about 1945. He told me that the horse shed was moved to Jasper Valley Swim Club to use for storing boats.

His obituary says that Charlie was born in the house, the third generation of Duvals in Amherst. His mother was also born in the house, and it is where his parents married.

WA Auction Thanks

Heartfelt thanks to all who generously supported the Woman's Association's first online Sleighbells Marketplace Auction. It was a quick substitution for their annual Holiday Fair, their primary fundraiser.

The easy-to-use auction site was a resounding success, bringing in over \$8,000 to fund the WA annual church pledge and their support of local community charities.

Thanks to generous donations of auction items, from a helicopter ride, to a vacation on Squam Lake, to our usual lovely handcrafts, antiques and treasure items. More thanks to our eager shoppers and bidders. Also, thanks to all who helped spread the word to family, friends and neighbors to tell them about our fantastic first online auction. We had over 80 bidders, many from outside our immediate church family.

Thanks also to Cynthia Dokmo for her generous sponsorship from *Gatherings* at the Colonel Shephard House, to Shelley Fajans for her graphic design talents, and to Jeanne Neverisky for her help with Facebook publicity.

Happy NEW Year, continued from page 1

vaccines against the virus are now being distributed in our communities. Schools are preparing to pivot back to in-person learning by the end of the month, now that the holidays are behind us. And here at CCA, our Reopening Team will continue to watch the case numbers in our area and assess the risks, knowing that we already have all the necessary precautions in place to resume in-person worship once the decision is made to do so.

It may be spring before we notice some sense of normalcy returning as we resume the routines and rhythms of our lives. Perhaps still with precautions being taken, but with restrictions being loosened and the return of the warmer weather it will feel as if we're finally emerging back into the light after spending a year in darkness.

We're not there yet. But as the Christmas story reminds us every year, the light returning to the world is not an instantaneous event. The world didn't heal itself of all its brokenness the moment that Jesus was born into the world. He was a grown man before people started listening to his message and following his way. And as we know, even after his death and resurrection, our world continued and continues to struggle with what it means to live following the way of love rather than fear. But the optimist in me – and the follower of Christ in me – believes that we are inching our way towards the light. There are a million stories of good-ness to counteract the stories of bad-ness that we seem compelled to gravitate towards. "Look for the helpers," as Fred Roger's mother famously said. But don't just look. Jesus calls us to be the helpers. Be the one who comforts, cares, listens, loves, gives, forgives.

Those of you who gravitate towards helping know what happens when you do so. You start to see the light. All around you. And what more could we ask for in this season of Epiphany? This season where the light of Christ is revealed to us in his baptism and the beginning of his ministry.

January brings a new year and a new season on our Christian calendar, but in many ways we're just continuing where we left off. The Christmas story is still unfolding. The light of Christ is still coming into the world, through us. We will be talking about the events of 2020 for years to come, that is certain. But 2021 is waiting to make its mark as well. And that mark depends greatly on how much of that light we see, and carry into the world. Inch by inch.

Happy NEW year to you all, and happy season of Epiphany!

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



Creative Worship

Sunday, January 17 at 10:00 a.m.

Reject Racism

Creative Worship happens on the THIRD SUNDAY of every month, with special music, an engaging message presented in a creative way, 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 January our worship theme is "Reject Racism." In the month where we

observe the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is it enough to celebrate that we are all children of God regardless of our differences? Or is God calling us to look deeper in our own hearts and truly listen to and love our neighbor as we help build the Kin-dom of God? We hope you can join us online!



Small Groups Bring Us Closer Together and Closer to God!

This year our groups are exploring THE SHORT STORIES OF 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. In January, our focus parable is "The Laborers in the Vineyard." This is the parable that many of us struggle with the most, as it gives us the tale of a landowner who pays all of his workers equally, regardless of how long they've worked – one hour or all day. "How can this be fair?" we ask. But what if we substituted "God's grace" for "wages earned?" Do we still think some are more deserving than others?

January Meeting Schedule:

Sunday Group—January 3
11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

Tuesday Group—January 5
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Upcoming Group Discussion Topics:

February: The Talents
March: The Prodigal Son
April: The Sower
May: The Mustard Seed
June: The Lost Sheep

If you're interested in joining one of our groups please contact Pastor Maureen at 673-3231 x11 - pastormaureen@ccamherst.org.

Adult Ed Series A NEW Look at the OLD Testament



Wednesdays, January 6 and 20
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 video lecture series produced by the Great Courses. Each 25-minute lecture offers a fresh perspective and sheds new light on one of the world's most beloved books.

We'll gather on Zoom to watch the lectures together and have a group discussion afterward, facilitated by Pastor Maureen. This class meets every first and third Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. All are welcome even if it's your first time joining us!

Please RSVP to pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the members section.

SHARE Food Pantry

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



January
Pantry Requests:
canned ham, canned
meats, side dishes
(seasoned pasta mix,
Hamburger Helper, etc.),
ravioli & beefaroni

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

“I didn't know what I didn't know!” The Waking Up Journey Begins at CCA

Introduction by Pastor Kate

Responses from the group transcribed by Jeanne Neverisky
Contributors: Sally Bowkett, Heidi Fortune, Jana Howe, Anne Krantz,
Carol St Jean, Jeanne Neverisky

In 2005, author David Foster Wallace began a commencement speech with this parable:

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys. How's the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the [heck] is water?”

15 years later, on May 25, 2020, the death of George Floyd made waves that reverberated across this country, and people started to see the waters of systemic racism that we all swim in, some for the very first time. Protests bloomed and gained momentum across the country, and more and more, violence against black people was picking up traction in the media. Here in Amherst, Maureen and I received emails and calls from folks in our congregation asking “Are we going to talk about this?” and we recognized that to stay silent was to make a statement in itself. And so we preached about it, and prayed about it in worship. We talked with individuals about their thoughts and worries and questions. And we offered a book study to examine our own relationship with race and racism in America.

Twenty-seven people signed up for the first book group on *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debbie Irving. Looking back, I think that there was so much interest in the group for multiple reasons. People wanted to learn more—I think folks had a growing sense that they were missing a very important piece of a puzzle that this country has been trying to put together for generations. Somehow, the reliable ideas that “I don't see color” or “Racism isn't a New Hampshire problem because we don't have many people of color here” were no longer holding water. Also, we needed one another more than ever. With COVID-19 in full swing and the regular activities at the church on hold, we were craving connection with our community.

The first group met four times in June and July, but we weren't done yet! About 24 new and returning congregants signed on for a second book study, and for six weeks from the end of August to the beginning of October we read and talked about Ijioma Oluo's book, *So You Want to Talk About Race?* In addition to learning more about racism, whiteness, and what we can do about it, this group engaged people across demographics in our church, introducing long time members to one another for the first time. The group laughed and cried, became vulnerable, and grew stronger in Christian values and convictions together. We learned more about the water we are swimming in, and that makes all the difference.

A small group is now gathering bi-weekly to work on a research project examining the history of racism in America. Please reach out to Pastor Kate via email if you would like to see our church offer another anti-racism book study this spring! Though the protests have dispersed and the media has moved on, the work has just begun.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Kate

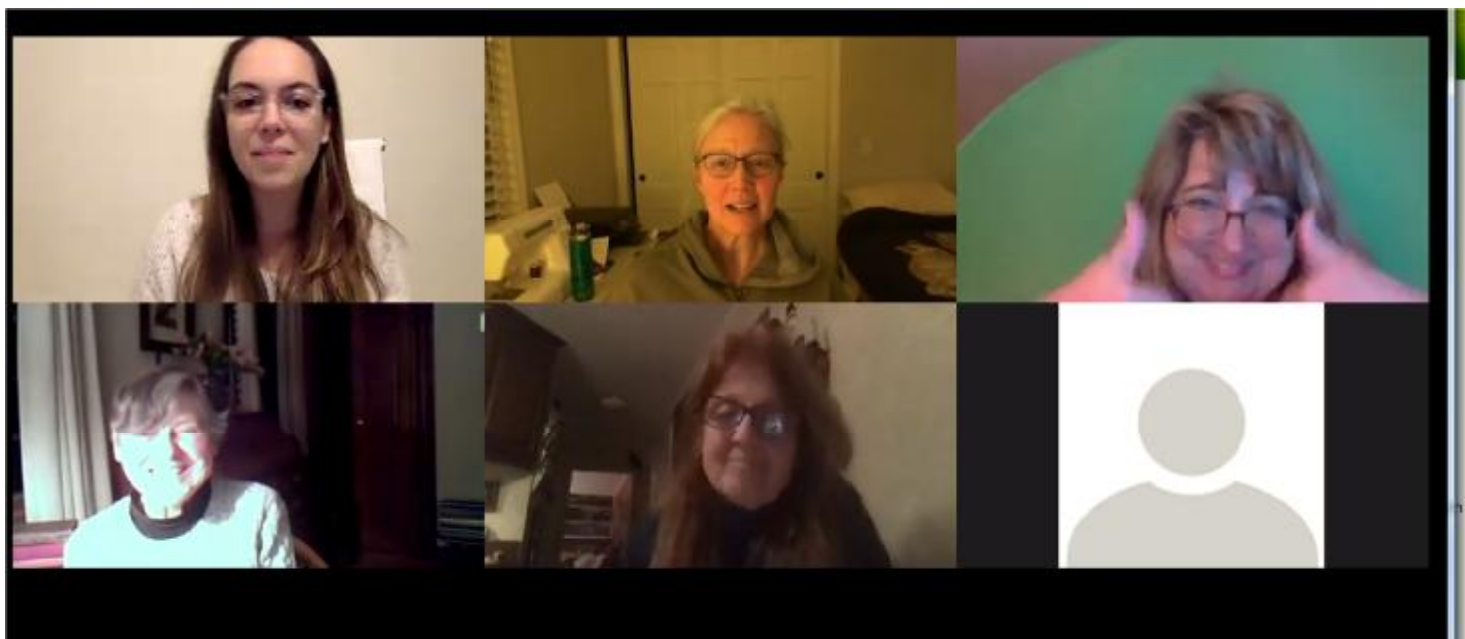
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I didn't know what I didn't know!, continued from page 4

A few of us met recently to look back on our journey thus far. Here are some thoughts on that journey from members of the group:

- "I don't know what I expected to learn by joining this church anti-racism group, but what I got was an amazing journey into what it's like to be black in America, what the history of slavery and other racist ideas and systems really looks like, and, most startlingly: *I began to get a beginner's understanding of what white supremacy looks like and how it lives in me.*"
- "I had so much to learn and there was comfort in knowing there were other people in similar places."
- "Comfort becomes important as we can feel vulnerable or uneasy while looking into our own roles and lives. It helps to have, as we did in Kate and in one-another, a supportive environment as we open up to *do* that. "
- "It was a great way to meet members of the church in a challenging time and to have thoughtful and thought-provoking discussions. Everyone's openness and desire to learn created a comfortable environment to share."
- "I'm so happy that I'm in a church that wants to pursue this!"
- "...and I'm excited that I got to be with other people that are not in my household (during COVID)! It meant so much to me to get to know people I didn't already know. A tremendous plus."
- "Having had but few opportunities to know black people, I was aware that I had no idea what systemic racism was/is all about. Through our readings and discussions, I am more aware of the long racist legacy that has been ducked and ignored in the US, resulting in the disturbing and on-going plight of black people today. At this stage I have started learning on my own, in reading about the history that led to the present situation of distrust and even hatred."
- "I am so grateful to Pastor Kate for being so committed to this topic, for giving (us) an opportunity to work together to hopefully make this place a better place for all, and for being such a gifted and sensitive facilitator on such an emotionally charged issue. I am so grateful for all the people of faith who have so far participated in this important group."
- "For me personally, I hadn't realized that I had 'blinders' on to all of the 'subtle racism.' Obvious racism is just that: out front for all to see or those who care to see. It's the years of 'subtle racism' that a lot of white people miss seeing, miss acknowledging, on purpose or not."
- "To look at oneself in the mirror and see racism looking back, consciously or unconsciously, is a wake up call to take a stand against what is wrong and to stand up for what is right, fair, and just."
- "It was refreshing and interesting to meet people at different ages and stages in their lives, as this interest cut across all of those."

Pictured top right to left: Pastor Kate, Jeanne Neverisky, Heidi Fortune,
Bottom right to left: Anne Krantz, Sally Bowkett, Carol St Jean (no pic as she was busy with her puppy!)



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