VILLAGE SPIRE

March 2021











Lenten Season at CCA

On February 17 we started a new Lenten season at the Congregational Church of Amherst. Lent is a journey that we embark on as a community, and this year during Lent our community is focused is Hope. Throughout the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, we come to church to explore hope in the wilderness together! We have so many ways to engage in the Lenten season this year, and it's not too late to jump in and join us!

Lenten Book Series: Join Pastors Kate and Maureen on Wednesday nights for a four-week Adult Education offering. Together we will be reading Anne Lamott's Almost Everything: Notes on Hope. See Pastor Maureen's article for more information!

CCA Lent Calendar: Inserted in this month's Spire is Pastor Kate's "A Practice a Day" 2021 Lent Calendar. Post it somewhere that you pass by daily, and join your church family in small, mindful practices to honor this

Holy Week: Even though we are online, we will still walk with Jesus as he approaches the cross during Holy Week.

- Palm Sunday, March 28, 10:00 a.m.
- Maundy Thursday, April 1, 7:00 p.m.
- Good Friday, April 2, TBD
- Easter Sunday: On April 4 at 10:00 a.m. join us for a service to celebrate the new life we find in Christ. Come and sing a joyful song, for Christ has risen, Christ has risen indeed!

Feeling Connected?

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor March 2021

On March 8th it will be one full year since we last gathered in our sanctuary. We've now cycled through an entire year on our church calendar - celebrating the Lenten season, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Pentecost, Rally Sunday, Advent, and the Christmas season, remotely. Now here we are entering the season of Lent yet again, with the possibility of spending another Easter gathered around our computer, iPad and smartphone screens, being church together from afar. We've had much to celebrate in the past year as our Stewardship Team detailed in last month's "Good News" letter. We found many ways to stay connected online and in person during this time apart, and despite the challenges, we forged new connections through outreach to our neighbors in need. But that doesn't negate the fact that we all miss being together as a church in our building, and that for many of us the feeling of connection we long for is difficult to experience through a screen. In our desire to celebrate our efforts to stay connected, we also don't want to overlook or dismiss those who are NOT feeling connected - because of a technological hurdle or because for some church will never be church without a physical space to worship in and the physical presence of the people we know and love. Continued on page 3

Our Time, Our Turn **Continues Going Forward**

On January 31, many members of the congregation met remotely and listened to a detailed presentation by Doug Topliffe and Todd Whitney about the remaining three projects of our ambitious capital campaign: the kitchen remodeling, the painting of the church exterior, and the meetinghouse window restoration. Specific details can be found on the capital campaign page on our website, but a guick summary follows:

- The kitchen renovation project will be completed by Turnstone Corp. in Milford, at a cost not to exceed (NTE) \$147,796. Previous expenditures for electrical work and the hot water heater are \$1,296; the total project is \$152,592. Work has begun and is scheduled for completion in April.
- The church exterior repair and repainting cost is NTE \$79,850 and is scheduled for May-June. We are in talks with the town regarding the steeple painting.
- The meetinghouse window restoration project cost is NTE \$101,757. It is a one-year project scheduled for June 2021-May 2022, and is flexible.

As promised, we have not started any project without funds in hand to cover the cost during this campaign. We are in the third and final year of the campaign. We have the funds for the kitchen project. If we receive approximately \$32,000 of the 2021 pledges by mid-late April, the exterior painting project can begin. We encourage those who are able to complete their pledge by April so we can start the painting project that is desperately needed.

With your help and generous financial support, we have made great strides in making our historic building safe, more efficient and more functional for today and for the future. We are very hopeful that we can complete our campaign successfully and on time!

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.

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

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
mgibson@ccamherst.org

Feeling Connected??

Join us on a Zoom forum!

There is much to be celebrated about 2020 and early 2021. Despite all the limitations the COVID-19 virus has placed on our church and community, there is indeed Good News. As detailed in the recent letter from the Stewardship Team, "we pivoted..extended our reach...kept going....[and] we are THE CHURCH in the World!"



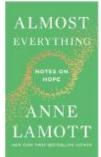
All these accomplishments are due to the energy, dedication, and creativity of our staff, the time and efforts of so many church volunteers, and your financial support. Now is the time the Stewardship and Budget teams plan for our next fiscal year, beginning June 1. To continue providing for our staff, our building, our missions and programs, and much more, we rely on your continued support.

As we have been unable to see each other on a regular basis, the Stewardship Team is sponsoring informal chat sessions with you and fellow church members via a Zoom meeting. These small group forums will allow us to hear about programming plans and updates on the capital campaign, to ask questions and offer input to the committee, and most importantly, to be connected! Please sign up online or by phone (673-3231 ext 0 for Andrea) to join us and to get the Zoom link for one of the following time options:

Sunday, February 28 at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 4 at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, March 7 at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Sincere thanks for your continuing support!

Stewardship team members Susan Holden, Linda Lannin, Will Redway, Kathy Skoglund, and Resource Ministry Coordinator Doug Topliffe



Lenten Book Series

Wednesday Evenings March 3, 10, 17 and 24 6:30-8:00 p.m.

For five Wednesday evenings during Lent we will gather on Zoom to discuss writer Anne Lamott's wonderful book: *Almost Everything: Notes on Hope.* With Lamott's engaging wit and insight as our guide, we'll set off in search of hope, even if uncertainty seems to surround us: in the news, in our families,

and in ourselves. When we feel, as Lamott puts it, "doomed, stunned, exhausted, and over-caffeinated--the seeds of rejuvenation are at hand." In this profound and funny book, Lamott calls for each of us to rediscover the nuggets of hope and wisdom that are buried within us. Divided into short, easy-to-read chapters, the book explores topics like aging, grief, unplugging from the world, the names and nature of God, and how we might learn to live with and love those who think, believe, and vote so differently than we do.

Pastor Maureen and Pastor Kate will alternate as facilitators of the sessions. The book is available for purchase for \$15 on Amazon. Each session will focus on three chapters of the book beginning with the Prelude. If you're unable to read the book join us anyway! We'll pull out quotes and passages to seed our discussion and all are welcome to participate! RSVP to pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or find it on our church website in the member's section.

Feeling Connected? continued from page 1

During the month of March, our Stewardship Team will host three small-group online forums, on March 7, 11, 18, where we're inviting you to share how you're feeling now that we're one year into this unprecedented time of separation (see the article in this *Spire*). In what ways have you been feeling connected? What more could we be doing to help you and others feel connected? If you're unable to attend one of the scheduled forums, or if you are among those who don't have access to Zoom, we especially welcome hearing from you. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me (Pastor Maureen) or Pastor Kate, via telephone or email, or reach out to one of our Stewardship Team members (Doug Topliffe, Kathy Skoglund, Susan Holden, Linda Lannin, Will Redway).

If you're among those who have access to technology but for various reasons have not been connecting with your church family during our time apart, the season of Lent is a wonderful time to reconnect. Many have shared that they've found it meaningful to watch or listen to our worship services on our website or on YouTube when its convenient for them - on Sunday afternoon, on a weekday evening, on a morning walk, while folding the laundry, or setting aside a quiet space and time to do so. Others have enjoyed gathering together to watch worship at 10:00 on Sunday mornings on Facebook (you don't have to join Facebook to watch!), where we chat with each other in the comments, or just say "Good morning!" to let others know we're there, or even post our prayers and say "Peace be with you!" when its time to do so. Many have also shared that they go back and watch our services again and again, to rehear an especially meaningful sermon, or just to listen to the wonderful music - Michael's Preludes and Postludes, Sara's solos and hymns, Wendy's bell pieces, recordings of our Chancel Choir, and the beautiful musical offerings we've had from others in our congregation.

Our adult education gatherings are also a wonderful place to connect during this season of Lent, either through the Wednesday evening Lenten book study (March 3-24 at 6:30 p.m.) where we'll discuss Anne Lamott's wonderful book, "Almost Everything", or our Wednesday morning study of the Old Testament (every first and third Wednesday at 10:00 a.m.), where we watch a video together and share our thoughts and questions afterward, or our Small Group Ministry groups, which gather once a month to check-in with each other and chat about the monthly topic. All of these gatherings are informal, you don't have to have any previous knowledge of the topics that we're discussing, and it's a wonderful way to "see" each other and check-in with each other until it's safer to do so in person!

Finally, if you miss the time we had to check in with each other every Sunday, whether by lingering in the sanctuary after worship, or mingling in the community room during our Coffee Hour, we encourage you to join us at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays for our Zoom coffee hour. Most people pop in and stay for 10 minutes to a half hour, just to say "Hi!" and see how others are doing. Feel free to come and go as needed. We miss seeing you as much as you miss seeing others!

Our sincere hope is that we will be able to gather again in our building in the spring or early summer, as the weather warms and more people are vaccinated and are feeling safer about gathering. But as we long for the Resurrection (with a capital "R") that Easter will bring, and the resurrection (with a small "r") that the loosening of restrictions will bring, we will continue to seek ways to cultivate our connection as a church family — in this season of Lent and in the months to come. How might we help you feel more connected? We'd love to hear from you!



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 March, our focus parable is "The Prodigal Son." This is another parable that many of us struggle with as we put ourselves in the place of the loyal son who watches with frustration and envy as his wayward brother is welcomed home by their father with a party and seemingly no consequences for his actions. But what if we put ourselves in the place of the brother? Or the father? Does a shift in perspective change our understanding of this story?

March Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday Group, March 2 1:30—3:00 p.m.

Sunday Group, March 7 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Upcoming Group Discussion Topics:

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

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



MHYG: Save the Dates!

Middle High Youth Group will be meeting once a month on Sunday afternoons outside throughout the spring (weather willing)! Here is the MHYG schedule for the next few months:

March 21: This month, MHYG will think about the meaning of Lent, and wiggle through the wilderness together.

April 18: It's the Easter season! Come to MHYG and celebrate new life.

May 16: Though MHYG will meet a few times over the summer, this is our last MHYG of the program year! Come for year-end treats and surprises.

MHYG is a monthly youth group that welcomes all 5-8th graders, whether they go to this church, or any church, or none at all! All are welcome to attend this gathering focused on fun, fellowship and faith. Reach out to Pastor Kate for more information!

Prayerful Playgroup: A Group for Grownups with Kids!

Are you a person with little people at home? Are you navigating parenting in a pandemic? Do you seek spiritual refreshment that is relevant to your life, with people who are also in the midst of raising kids?

Then come to Prayerful Playgroup! Every first and third Thursday of the month, from 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. on Zoom, parents of faith come together to share the joys and trials of parenting, reflect on a spiritual topic for the day, and pray together. This is a welcoming space, open to people who attend our church, or any church, or none at all! For more information, email Pastor Kate.

Church School

CROWN OF THORNS is an at home activity to remind children how sacrifice can provide guidance during Lent. It was for forty days that Jesus wandered the wilderness prior to His ultimate sacrifice.

Christians spiritually prepare today through sacrifice, a rigorous offering from each of us.

http://www.totalhealthnow.me/recipe/homemadecrown-of-thorns-lenten-activity/

The Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-2) "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished."

MARCH BROWN BAG LESSONS: Forgive Often — The church theme for March is apparent in the story of "Joseph Helps His Family" and more. Readings and activities are prepared by church school teachers and will be delivered to each registered family. Brown Bag lessons for March will be distributed to those who have registered on SignUpGenius. SignUpGenius is waiting for you to sign up if you have not already done so.

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0d4caea62ea1f8c25-church1

Pastor Maureen's invitation welcomes you to participate in children's time during worship. Please contact her to take part.



A NEW Look at the OLD Testament

Adult Ed Series Wednesdays, March 3 and 17 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.

Staying Connected in So Many Ways

An interview with Nancy Protzmann

By Sue Spiess

After moving Amherst in 1999, becoming discouraged with their church, the Protzmann family was looking for a new church home and her father-in-law suggested the Congregational Church. Sam, 12 at the time, loved coming to church and the youth group. The Protzmanns knew that when a young teen enjoys church, it's time to join.

That was 2004. Sam and siblings Matt and Annie were all confirmed in the church, and Annie loved



youth group. But it is Nancy who jumped in, shared her skills and knowledge, and who has been a stalwart volunteer ever since. With her degree in computer science, she has the technical background that has been invaluable to the communications committee, and having raised three children, she has insight and experience to work with the youth.

Nancy is quick to downplay her role in so many activities, but she gets very enthusiastic talking about being an advisor to the Senior High Youth Fellowship for three years (she loved it), a confirmation advisor for three years, and a chaperone on several mission trips, all while working at PC Connection. She served on the Music Committee and was Ministry Coordinator for four years. Nancy is now on World Service, which has been very busy during the pandemic, finding ways we can help our neighbors near and far.

Nancy has been a member of the Communications Committee since 2009, when CCA had a basic website. Despite all her technical knowledge, she had never designed a website, but she took it over and has been our webmaster ever since. A new website was launched in 2019 by Nancy and Camille Davis, and with the help of Jeanne Neverisky (whom she is very quick to credit), the site has morphed into the most comprehensive repository of CCA information (other than calling Andrea, Nancy notes!). What began as an effort to reach new members is now the home for much more, including the members section, where one can submit a prayer request, view photos, meeting minutes, the member directory, the church school blog, zoom meeting links, and more.

Due to the efforts of Jeanne and Nancy, and our Pastors, we now have a presence on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Sally Varanka and Nancy work together on News from the Pews. All are vehicles to reach people who we couldn't reach before, to engage new members and "seasoned" members alike.

"I wouldn't know so many people if I hadn't been involved in the church. I love the sense of community and having friends of all different ages and backgrounds," says Nancy. While our ability to get together and meet new friends in person is limited right now, the website and other internet sites have allowed us to stay connected as much as possible. The World Service projects have helped us to reach out to our larger community. Nancy's goal is to continue to work with our church family to keep that sense of community alive and growing.

AmazonSmile:

You Shop. Amazon Gives. CCA Benefits!

Here is a super-easy, no-cost way to support the church. CCA is an eligible charitable organization on the smile.amazon.com website. Once you have signed in and set up your account, Amazon will donate 0.5% of all eligible purchases to the church. It costs you nothing, and once you've signed up, you do nothing! How easy is that?

The details:

- Go to smile.amazon.com on your web browser or activate AmazonSmile on your Amazon Shopping app on the your cell phone.
- Scroll down to the bottom and select "get started."
- Enter "Congregational Church of Amherst" under selected charity.
- Your Amazon.com and AmazonSmile are linked; all information (shopping cart, Wish List, etc.) are the same.
- Remember to go to smile.amazon.com every time you shop.
- For more information, visit
 https://smile.amazon.com/
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Hats Off to Two Wonderful Women!

Andrea Cyr and Sara Phelps are celebrating their 30th anniversaries as Church Administrator and Music Director at CCA! It is hard for most of us to remember a time when Andrea and Sara were not a presence in our midst. They have brought energy, enthusiasm, consistency, and commitment to our church. Much has happened in the past 30 years, and both Andrea and Sara have always and unfailingly offered their skill, dedication, and institutional knowledge to our church family. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Creative Worship

Sunday, March 21 at 10:00 a.m. "Forgive Often"



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 March our worship theme is "Forgive Often." Every Sunday when we say The Lord's Prayer, we promise to "forgive those who sin/trespass/hold debts against us," but this is always easier said than done. What does it mean to forgive? Are we expected to move quickly to forgiveness, or is it a process, that sometimes we struggle to complete? We hope you can join us for this special service online!

SHARE Food Pantry

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

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

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

Church Abolition Troubles

Adapted by Anne Krantz, Historian Original by Gene Cronin, former CCA Historian

During the early 1840's in America, slavery flourished in the South while in the North, abolition gathered strength. In Amherst, Luther Melendy brought the issue home. Melendy was born in Amherst and was an active and respected member of the Congregational Church.

In February of 1841, at a regular meeting of the church, Melendy presented an "abolition resolution." According to the minutes of the meeting, "another resolution presented by Aaron Lawrence upon the subject of slavery was read." The church voted that this second resolution better represented its "feelings on the matter." After considerable debate, Lawrence's resolution was tabled for another day while Melendy's resolution was dismissed.

There is no copy of Melendy's resolution, but to read Lawrence's replacement is to get a sense of what it said. "Resolved, the church regards slavery as a great sin and therefore it ought immediately be done away. And as to the best means of doing away [with] this evil and sin, we think Christians may honestly differ. Resolved that we consider calm, gentle means best calculated to do away with this evil. Resolved that for the church to withdraw its fellowship from all professed Christians who may not think or act as we would choose to have them upon this subject, is inexpedient and, at the present, uncalled for. And in our view, would not be productive of good to the anti-slavery cause."

According to Secomb's *History of Amherst*, the episode alienated Melendy from the church and he "refused any longer to assist in the support of preaching and encouraged the establishment of, and attendance upon, a meeting in the chapel on the Sabbath in opposition to the regular services."

Over the next several months church delegations met with him to attempt a reconciliation. In May the church met and Melendy, speaking to the congregation, said that his mind was unchanged. According to the minutes he was "persisting and justifying his violation of the convenant he made with God and the church." Melendy was "excommunicated from the fellowship" for violating his covenant vows. Over the next few months nine others left the church over the same issue.

Melendy forced the Amherst church to wrestle with questions of whether slaveholders should be accepted as members and should the church work actively against what was then the law. Even ministers could not agree on how to handle the slavery issue. At the General Convention of Congregational Ministers in Albany in 1852, the ministers discussed a resolution to provide missionary aid to churches in slave-holding states. An amendment was proposed holding that anyone owning slaves violated the principals of Christian religion and should not be admitted as a member. As in Amherst, there was a long debate among the

ministers, ending in defeat of the amendment and acceptance of the original resolution.

Melendy was like Jefferson's "fire bell in the night." His extreme position pushed people out of their comfort and forced them to confront the evils of slavery. In Secomb's words, Melendy was "one of the first to engage in the anti-slavery movement, which he advocated and defended against the most determined opposition, and lived to see it crowned with success." (Secomb's History of the Town of Amherst, pg. 303)



The Luther Melendy Gravestone, Meadowview Cemetery Born June 2, 1793 Died Sept. 30, 1889

What exactly is the Members section of the website?

- Q: What is the Members section of the website?
- A: It is a private 'login' section, primarily to provide the congregation with online access to information that might not be appropriate for general online viewing, such as the church directory, Zoom links, photo galleries, etc.



- Q: Why aren't Zoom links in the event details?
- A: Unfortunately, hackers/spammers have used public Zoom links to enter meetings and speak/act inappropriately. It is merely a safety measure for our meeting attendees.
- Q: Do I have to be a member of the church to access this area?
- A: Not at all. Anyone that is a member or friend of the church can request a login. The login allows us to verify the user before providing access, to ensure the security of the information.
- Q: What can I find in the Members section?
- A: There is a great deal of useful information!
 - Virtual information such as important notices, recurring meeting Zoom links, Church School Blog, a form to submit and view prayer requests, etc.
 - Current church directory and form to update contact information
 - Monthly Council minutes and relevant church-wide presentations
 - Sensitive church financial documents including monthly Treasurer reports
 - Past annual reports and annual meeting presentations
 - General policy documents
 - Photo galleries
- Q: How do I request access to the Members section?
- A: To request an account, please go to our website and click on the <u>MEMBERS</u> menu option, and then click on 'Request User Account' and fill out the form. Your request will be received and once setup, you will receive an email on how to set your password. If you lose your password you can always use the 'Lost Your Password' option.

More questions? Please contact Nancy Protzmann.

There Will Be Rest

There will be rest, and sure stars shining Over the roof-tops crowned with snow,

A reign of rest, serene forgetting, The music of stillness holy and low.

I will make this world of my devising Out of a dream in my lonely mind. I shall find the crystal of peace, above me Stars I shall find

Our Chancel Choir sang this gorgeous piece of music two years ago during Lent. It was a challenge in that it was "a cappella," complicated rhythmically, the harmonies were hard to hear at first, and it required such delicate sensitivity and attention to blend. It was all of that...and so beautiful. And, oh my goodness, it was one of those moments!

Our choirs miss singing and ringing together, we miss our rehearsals and the fellowship on Thursday evenings. Thank goodness for our online services where we can sing hymns, hear vocal solos, Wendy's bell solos and Michael's magnificent Preludes and Postludes. The Chancel Choir is preparing a prayer response that will be ready by early March.

We are fortunate, and I am filled with gratitude. Grateful for a loving and supportive church family, blessed with colleagues who inspire, and filled with hope as we journey through Lent together.

Peace, Sara Phelps, Director of Music

Financial Summary

(as of January 31, 2021)



	YTD	YTD	
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	Difference
Income	\$292,322	\$256,551	\$ 35,770
Expenses	\$244,099	\$261,808	\$(17,709)
Net Income	\$ 48,222	\$(5,257)	\$ 53,479

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).

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