The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

I believe faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environments we grow in. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture. Faith is also shaped by initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives.

~ James W. Fowler

THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

December 26, 2021 **First Sunday of Christmas** **10:00 a.m.**

GATHERING CHIMES
Let us be gathered in silence so that we may prepare to worship.

GREETING AND NOTICES OF PARISH LIFE

PRELUDE *Resonet in Laudibus (Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine)* Edward Kerr

*CALL TO WORSHIP adapted from Psalm 148

One: Praise the LORD!
Many: Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!
One: Praise God, all you angels; praise God, all heavenly hosts!
Many: Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!
One: Praise God, you highest heavens, and you deepest waters!
Many: Mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars!
One: Wild animals and cattle, creeping things and flying birds!
Many: Kings and presidents, business leaders and all peoples of the earth!
One: People of all genders together, old and young alike!
Many: Let them praise the name of the LORD,
One: For God commanded and they were created. God established them forever and ever.
All: Praise the Lord, who created us and knows us and loves us. Praise God, who is powerful beyond measure.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION and THE LORD'S PRAYER (unison)
Lord of Heaven and Earth, Lord of our lives, we do not come to this place fully formed. Rather, we come as balls of clay, ready to be molded and coaxed by your word into the brave, kind, loving Christians we long to be. May our worship today be an answer to a question, or a moment of peace, or a path to connection, or whatever we might need today. May we learn that we belong here, in your house, among your people. May we find today a sense of belonging so profound we feel called to share it with others.

With this in mind, let us pray the words that Jesus taught us, saying :

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE *Gloria*

Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of God be with you. AND ALSO WITH YOU.

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 2:41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

SERMON "Children Belong in Church"

ANTHEM *A Christmas Improvisation* Jim Gottwald

JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYER

If you have a prayer to share, fill out a prayer card in your pew and place it in the "Joys and Concerns" plate at the back of the sanctuary. Ushers will bring the cards forward to the pastor during the Anthem.

ORGAN PRAYER RESPONSE

INVITATION TO OUR OFFERING

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)
Like the child Jesus learning in the temple, we know that we too grow closer to you, God, through our participation in this church. So bless this offering. May it be a sign of our commitment to this place, our love for this community, and our gratitude for this congregation's powerful presence, in our lives and in the world. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN *What Child Is This* side page

*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

*THE LIGHT OF CHRIST GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD

*POSTLUDE *Angels We Have Heard on High* Lani Smith

(*Indicates that those who are able may stand.)

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from One License with license #A-731944.

The Lectionary texts for the next two weeks are:

January 2: Matthew 2:1-12
Second Sunday after Christmas
Epiphany

January 9: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22
The Baptism of Christ

What Child Is This

GREENSLEEVES 8.7.8.7 with refrain

English ballad, 16th century
Arr. *Christmas Carols New and Old,* 1871

William Chatterton Dix, c. 1871

This tune can be sung in the original mode by sharping all C's in the soprano and alto parts.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AMHERST, NH, UCC

A Welcoming, Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

We, the members of The Congregational Church of Amherst, New Hampshire, United Church of Christ, believe God's Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ call us to love all our neighbors as we would want to be loved. We are called to be as one body, seeking to walk together in the full life and ministry of our church.

We welcome each individual as a child of God. As covenant members of Christ's church, we celebrate God's love for people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, all mental and physical abilities, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all sexual orientations, all gender identities and gender expressions, and all of the other diverse attributes woven into the fabric of humankind.

With God's grace, we invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry and fellowship, worship and sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of our church.

We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us. Our membership is open to all those who choose to walk with us in our witness. Please speak with any of our deacons or pastors should you have any questions regarding our church or our membership.

Worship Notes:

- Church school is on break this week and will resume Sunday, January 9.
- Our church nursery is open, but not currently staffed, and is available when parents with young children feel the need for a quiet, safe space to go to during worship. A monitor is available to watch and listen to the service.
- Joys and Concerns may be written on the cards found on the small table as you entered the sanctuary. You are also welcome to submit your prayer request through our website in advance of the worship service.
- Offering plates can be found at the front and the rear of the sanctuary.
- Please join us in the community room for a time of fellowship after the worship service. Coffee and beverages are offered, and masks are required when not consuming beverages.
- In the event of an emergency, please remain seated until instructions have been given.

The church office is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m., and available Monday through Friday by telephone 673-3231 and by email info@ccamherst.org. Please feel free to leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can. Visit our church's website at www.ccamherst.org, and follow us on Facebook.com/ccamherst and Instagram.com/ccamherstnh.

Grounded in God's Love—Serving Neighbors Near and Far—Welcoming to All

PARTICIPATING IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church	Ministers to the World
Rev. Katherine R. Kennedy	Associate Pastor
Michael Havay	Organist/Accompanist
Russ Demarest	Deacon in Charge
Jim Gottwald	Musician
Doug Topliffe	Videographer

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Rev. Maureen R. Frescott	Senior Pastor
Sara L. Phelps	Director of Music
Wendy Valeri	Bell Choir Director
Gretchen Davis	Interim Children's Coordinator

THE CHURCH OFFICE is closed through January 2 for the Christmas and New Year holidays. If you have an urgent pastoral concern, please let us know by leaving a message.

Year end 2021 donations can be made online by following the giving link on our website, or by mailing your check to the church office. Mail must be postmarked by December 31 in order to receive credit in 2021. Thank you for your year-round support of our church and its programs.

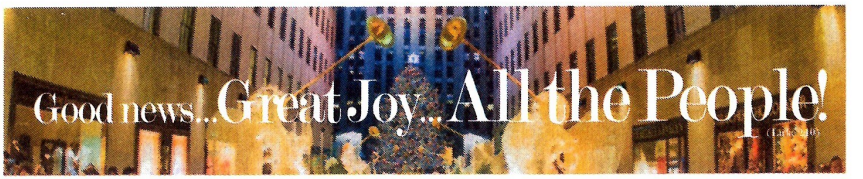
THE CHURCH SCHOOL is currently looking for help to build a new and improved living Nativity structure. Our current manger scene has not weathered our New England winters very well and is in disrepair. As this is a much loved Christmas tradition in our church we would very much like to reconstruct it with new materials for the 2022 Christmas season. If this is a project you may be interested in helping, please contact Gretchen Davis at churchschool@ccamherst.org for more details.

THE WREATHS ON THE FRONT of our church have been provided by the Jackson Fund, established many years ago by Robert Jackson to honor his mother's tradition of providing Christmas wreaths for our church. Elizabeth Darling Jackson began this family's tradition of providing the wreaths on the advice of her mother, Louella Darling.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED on Sunday mornings to help run the live-stream camera and laptop during worship. It's easy and we are hoping to train a few more folks so the rotation is easy on everyone. Contact Doug Topliffe if you'd like to learn. Donations towards the cost of this new technology continue to be gratefully accepted.

SHARE FOOD PANTRY requests for December include toothbrushes and toothpaste, deodorants, shampoo and conditioner, bar soap, feminine hygiene products, diapers and wipes. Donations should be brought directly to the SHARE Center in Milford; if you are unsure where, please call their office at 673-9898. Many thanks for your continuing support!

Sunday, December 26, 2021



"God is still speaking . . . to me!"

Every year, the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance receives dozens of letters, cards, emails, and phone calls saying "thank you" for much-needed financial assistance funded by your gifts to the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross.

Donations of any amount to the Christmas Fund truly do bring "great joy" to so many people, year after year. The assistance and connection provided by your gifts lets these servants of the church know that they are not forgotten. Here are excerpts from just a few of the notes of appreciation we have received:

From a retired pastor in Chicago . . .

I do not have words adequate to express my appreciation for the Christmas gift from the Christmas Fund. My prayer is that those who contributed to make this gift possible experience God's manifold blessings.

From a retired pastor who received assistance to purchase hearing aids . . .

Thank you for the gift from the church. I had no idea such help was available, especially to that extent. It gladdens my heart to know the church still cares. Sometimes, we don't always gat that affirmation while in the midst of doing ministry. But, God is still speaking . . . to me. Thank you so much!

From a pastor's spouse in North Carolina . . .

My husband and I thank you so very much for the ministerial assistance that was provided for us. It was so helpful and took a lot of stress from us, so we could concentrate on my husband's medical care and treatments. We never thought we would need ministerial assistance, but believe me, we are thankful for our national church and all those who give.

In 2020, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- **Monthly pension supplementation for 276 retired clergy and lay employees ($1,180,187)**
- **Health benefits supplementation for 89 retired clergy and lay employees ($274,008)**
- **Emergency grants for 96 individuals and families ($214,649)**
- **Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 504 retired clergy and lay employees ($252,000)**

The Christmas Fund

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund