



VILLAGE SPIRE

May 2022

“Sabbatical”

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
May 2022

Shabbat. Sabbath. Sabbatical. All three words share a common root, which means “ceasing.” *Shabbat* is the Jewish day of rest. The day the faithful set aside each week to commemorate the rest that God took on the seventh day after creating the world; the rest that God commanded us to take every seventh day as well. We may recognize *sabbath* as the time we set aside for rest. Taking an intentional day off or even just a few hours out of our busy day to recharge our batteries or replenish our souls. Ideally, keeping sabbath means we step away from our work and the multitude of things that fill our schedules and occupy our time and energy and instead direct that time and energy towards God, as a form of gratitude for the life we’ve been given.

A *sabbatical* is an extended time of sabbath. For pastors, it’s a time devoted to prayer, study, and discernment, but it also involves an intentional stepping away from all the demands of pastoring a congregation. This stepping away, or disengagement, creates space not just for needed rest and renewal, but also cultivates the soil for new things to grow – new ideas for programs and ministries for the congregation, new ways to serve others in the community, and new understandings of how to be ‘church’ in our changing world.

I have had the honor and pleasure to serve this wonderful congregation for ten years – first as the Associate Pastor and then as the Senior Pastor. As part of my Call Agreement - or “covenant” - that I have with the congregation, every five years I am permitted and encouraged to take a 3-month sabbatical. My last sabbatical was in 2017, and now here in 2022, it’s time for me to step away once again. My sabbatical will begin on April 25 and will end on July 25.

Pastor Kate will be covering all the pastoral needs in my absence, with the assistance of Sara Phelps, our Congregational Care Team, and our Deacons. We’ve scheduled guest preachers in May, June and July, to lighten the load on Kate and to ensure we have coverage should Kate’s baby come earlier than expected. Members of our congregation have offered to preach on several Sundays in May and June, with Kate’s assistance. In late June and July, we’ll have ordained clergy filling the pulpit, including the Rev. Heidi Carrington Heath from the NH Council of Churches, the Rev. Gordon Rankin (our NH Conference Minister), and the Rev. Charlotte Bell, a former member of our congregation whom many of you know and love. Charlotte will also be offering assistance with pastoral care as needed.

During my 2017 sabbatical, I filled the time with a mix of study tours, retreats, workshops, and travel with my wife, Stephanie. But this year, in the wake of all that we’ve done to keep our church surviving and thriving during the pandemic, I intend to devote more of this sabbatical to “rest and renewal” than study and travel. There will be some study: In May, I plan on attending the annual Festival of Homiletics, a week-long online conference organized by Luther Seminary that focuses on the practices of preaching and worship. I’m also looking into summer continuing education opportunities offered by Andover Newton at Yale Divinity School. And there are numerous webinars, podcasts, and books on everything from pastoral care practices to deep dives into biblical studies that I’m looking forward to delving into now that I’ll have the time to do so!

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This year’s annual meeting will be on
Sunday, May 15
after the worship service.

All members are encouraged to attend. Childcare will be provided.

BE A BLESSING PRACTICE PEACE.
LEAD WITH LOVE.
BE JOYFUL. PRAY OFTEN. BE KIND. GIVE THANKS.
DO GOOD. HAVE COURAGE. WORK FOR JUSTICE.
BE THE LIGHT ENCOURAGE OTHERS. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Creative Worship

Sunday, May 15
10:00 a.m.

“Be the Light”

Mark your calendars! “Creative Worship” happens on the third Sunday every month! This year our overarching theme is BE A BLESSING and each month we’ll have a different focus statement/scripture to inspire us to be a blessing to others.

In May, our worship theme is “Be the Light” and our scripture focus will be Matthew 5:13-16. Jesus urged his disciples to not hide their light under a bushel. The light he was speaking of is the light of God. As Christians we’re called to act as conduits for God’s love and justice in a world that is often resistant to both. How might we better shine our lights in the world?

VILLAGE SPIRE

A Parish Newsletter
Editor, Andrea Cyr

The Congregational Church of Amherst, NH,
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
Instagram.com/ccamherstnh

The church office is open
Monday, Wednesday and Friday
from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and
is available by telephone and email
Monday through Friday.

Send in all news by the
fifteenth of the month.

Announcements
for the Sunday bulletins
are due Thursday morning.

OUR CHURCH STAFF:

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Wendy Valeri
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Gretchen Davis
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SHYG Fundraiser! 100 Envelopes Helps Our SHYG Get to Austin!



This year's Senior High Youth Group Mission Trip is in Austin, TX. From June 19-24, our SHYG will be working with an organization called Reach Beyond Mission, serving those facing food insecurity and learning all about the injustice of food insecurity in our country.

Followers of Jesus are called to feed the hungry. Many churches just like ours work diligently providing food to neighbors in their communities, and yet Feeding America projects that 42 million people (1 in 8), including 13 million children (1 in 6), experienced food insecurity in 2021. While in Austin, our SHYG kids will explore how, as people of faith, we can reach beyond charity and work to end hunger in our own community.

YOU CAN HELP! With rising inflation, this year's trip will be a little bit pricier than trips past, so we need your help. The SHYG's 100 Envelopes Fundraiser, launched on Palm Sunday, is one way you can support our SHYG. In the community room, you will find a bulletin board display of envelopes numbered 1-100. Think about how much you'd like to donate to the SHYG mission trip, and grab an envelope (or a combination of envelopes) with that number on it! Want to give \$35, but envelope #35 is taken? Get creative, and snag envelopes #32 and #3!

All who give to the 100 Envelopes fundraiser will get a Mission Trip Newsletter live from Austin, TX!



Senior High Youth Group (Grades 9-12)

Hey, SHYG-- We are only a month away from Mission Trip Month! Throughout the month of May, SHYG will be spending time getting ready for our mission trip, June 19-24.

SHYG meets most Sunday evenings from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. at church. SHYG is a time of fellowship, fun, and faith exploration. As always, friends are welcome, whether they attend this church, any church, or none at all! SHYG is a place for high school kids to connect socially and spiritually, no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey.

Get in touch with Pastor Kate by text or at pastorkate@ccamherst.org for more information!

Middle High Youth Group (Grades 5-7)

MHYG is ready for spring! Join us on May 15 for our monthly MHYG meeting from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. This month our theme is "Be The Light" and we will be talking about how to share the light of God with others.

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 learn, grow, and have fun. MHYG offers kids a safe place to explore their spirituality, form deep relationships, and let loose through fellowship, games, check-ins, and sanctuary time.

ALL 5-7th graders are invited—whether or not they attend CCA! MHYG kids are always welcome to bring friends. Email Pastor Kate for more information.

“Sabbatical,” continued from page 1

There will also be some travel: In May and June, I’ve booked vacation homes here in NH (in Bradford and Greenfield) for 10 days each time. This will give me time away from Amherst and the opportunity to experience a solo retreat, as each home is situated on secluded acreage with access to hiking trails and cycle paths. I’m especially looking forward to exploring the many rail trails that we have here in NH! In July, Stephanie and I will spend a week up in Sullivan, Maine, at the vacation home we rent every year, and if safe travel allows, we may visit her mother in southern California as well.

In between these excursions, I will be home enjoying some unstructured time at the parsonage doing the things that I find best renew my spirit – reading, writing, biking, and walking. Herein lies the challenge of going on sabbatical when you live next door to the church you serve. It can be difficult to disengage when you’re close enough to see the comings and goings of parishioners, church events, and activities. Though it doesn’t happen often, I ask that parishioners not stop by the parsonage during this intentional time away. You may see me out and about in town at Moulton’s, at Shaw’s, or riding my bike, and it’s fine to say hello and ask how my sabbatical is going. What I do ask is that we resist the urge to ‘catch up’ on what’s going on at church or talk about pastoral concerns, or anything else that might bring my heart and mind out of my sabbatical and back into my work as your pastor.

I won’t be checking my church email or voicemail during this time, and I will be limiting my Facebook activity as well. This is not to say that you all won’t be on my heart and mind, because you will. I love serving this church and I love all of you. Which is why this stepping away is necessary, as it is for every pastor. I carry so much of you all with me as we walk this path of ministry together, that at times it is necessary to set it all down and allow myself space to rest, replenish, and renew. And when I return on July 25 I will be refreshed and ready to walk with you once again and continue this wonderful mission and journey we’re on to serve God and others, together.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



How to Write a Sermon Workshop on May 4 at 6:00 p.m.

Have you ever wondered how pastors compose a sermon every week, or where you might begin if you wanted to write a sermon yourself? Join Pastor Kate on May 4 at 6:00 p.m. for a virtual workshop on some sermon writing basics! We will cover things like: How to pick a scripture passage, where to go to research your sermon, how long it should be, and how to take our CCA context into account as you are writing.

While some of this workshop is focused on those who have volunteered to preach while Maureen is on sabbatical, it is open to any lay person who is interested in the art of preaching, whether you are signed up to be a lay preacher this summer or not! All are welcome, from the practiced lay preacher to the preaching-curious.



Small Groups Bring Us Closer Together and Closer to God!

This year our Small Groups are focusing on the BE A BLESSING theme that is guiding our Creative Worship and other church programs. Each month we’ll focus on a different way we might be a blessing to others by living our faith in the world.

In **May**, our focus theme is **“Be the Light”** and our focus scripture is **Matthew 5:13-16**. Jesus urged his disciples to not hide their light under a bushel. The light he was speaking of is the light of God. As Christians we’re called to act as conduits for God’s love and justice in a world that is often resistant to both. Being the light is risky and difficult at times. How might we better shine our lights in the world?

May Meeting Schedule:

Sunday Group, May 1
12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday Group, May 3
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

*June’s Group Discussion Topic
will be “Encourage Others.”*

Save the Date: Confirmation Sunday is June 5

This year, many of CCA’s eighth and ninth graders have spent two Thursdays a month, along with several Sundays and weekends, exploring what it means to be a Christian. On Pentecost Sunday, June 5, we will welcome them into full membership through the Rite of Confirmation. Join us for this special service!

Reflections On a Long Life: An Interview with Wilene Knight

By Sue Spiess

I had the great pleasure of recently sitting down with Wilene Knight on a rather cool, cloudy day. She said Wednesday would be fine, as Thursday would be sunny and warm and she would be out in her garden. So I arrived with notepad and pen in hand, ready for Wilene to tell me about herself and her many years in Amherst. Not only did she warmly welcome me, she gave me her carefully crafted "Reflections for the Spire." While we talked about her family as well as some fascinating history of Amherst, her story is best told in her own voice, printed below as she wrote it. I left her home that morning so grateful that she shared her wisdom, her time, and her story with me. I think you will agree.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE SPIRE

As a child, one of my life molding memories was the Sunday repetition of the hymnal Prayer of Confession from the back pew of our Woburn, MA Congregational Church. The prayer became a template for my personal code of behavior.

I have since learned it is our choice to understand God/The Holy Spirit/Christ as the I AM Presence, not somewhere out there, but within us. In doing so, and taking prayer seriously, you might also feel like a surprised recruit. This is a special time of planetary change and challenge!

My husband Burt and I came to Amherst in 1955. We soon joined the Amherst Congregational Church led by Pastor Frank Weiskel and later, Dr. Paul Trudinger. Inspired by Pastor Frank's knowledge and vision, Burt studied for an exciting semester at Andover Newton Theological School. He chose a lay ministry, but returned to lead the 150-pupil church school. After the hymn Burt, with humor and wisdom, told Biblical stories about people learning of God, mostly through their mistakes! It was about a God who loves and guides. And our job is to become hearts that love, and learn from our mistakes!

In 1971 our congregation was divided over the Viet Nam War. At a very angry church meeting, the members fired Minister Ken Sanford, who had been working with a youth group fearful of the draft. Of course there were other complaints, but Viet Nam was the biggest issue. Much of the church leadership left also, to form the lay-led 46-year Uniting Church of Christ. We sought to devote our funds to others, rather than choosing the expenses of structures. Our sharing was a feast of Spirit, but after 46 years, the time came to journey on, many to head "home."

I have come to believe that when our life purposes conclude, we head for the Gate and a life report card. If we ask for help in thought or prayer, and share with others, the maze of Life is navigated with guidance from the Spirit. It is our great gift!

Burt and I came to Amherst as newlyweds and were blessed to remain these 67 years in this 1793 home. Three dear children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren have joined us, along with sheep, goats with milk for allergic children, and greenhouses of flowers and tomatoes. Imagine a town with farm stands or Walmarts! I taught sixth grade at the Brick School; Burt chose industry, Biblical scholarship, and a lay ministry. And finally, our return, even "Welcome" to a dear, vibrant Amherst Congregational Church!

Every human being contains the God spark! Aligning yourself to the vibrational love of God connects you to all things and beings in the great oneness! The truth is that God, angels, and ones who have "passed" know our every thought, and when asked, aid us in our becoming!

Wilene Knight, April 2022

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence. And do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

David in Psalm 51

In Moses' farewell: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curse, therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and cleaving to Him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."



Burt and Wilene on the day they were welcomed back to our church!

Join the Church School in Celebrating Screen-Free Week May 1-7

Screen-Free Week is an international celebration held in schools, churches, and whole communities. It's an opportunity to unplug (after school and work responsibilities are done) for other types of entertainment, connection and fun!

Even though it's about going without screens, it isn't about going without—it's about what we get! More time with our family. Siblings getting along better! More time outdoors! More time reading or playing board games! Better sleep! For people of faith, it's also an opportunity to remove distractions and spiritual roadblocks and seek out what is meaningful in our lives—feeling more joy and wonder.

But wait there is more! On Friday, May 6, Church School will be hosting a Family Fun Night from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Join us here at the church for a campfire, outdoor glow stick games and s'mores! We will wrap up our screen-free week with an evening of fun for everyone.

Look for our table in the Community Room during Fellowship Hour to grab some great resources like Screen-Free Bingo and a list of 1-1 Screen-Free Activities. To pledge with families and individuals around the world, visit www.screen-free.org.



Racial Justice Mission Group

The Racial Justice Group at CCA is dedicated to learning about the impact of racism on God's world and our own hearts and minds, and taking action to bring about justice and the kin-dom of God in our community. Through reading, discussion, and service, CCA's Racial Justice Group seeks to live more fully into God's call to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Racial Justice Group meets every second Sunday of the month after worship. All who seek to learn more are welcome to join—you do not need to have participated in past meetings to join the conversation now! If you are interested in participating, please contact Pastor Kate or Steve Boczenowski.

Meet Our New Members!

On Sunday, March 27 we welcomed two new members into our church family!

Tom and Sara Pyle moved to Amherst last year and first visited us over the summer. They've belonged to UCC churches in the past and were happy to connect with our church community as they settle into their new home. Sarah works as a registered nurse in labor and deliver at Salem Hospital in MA. She likes camping and hiking, gardening and cooking. Tom works as an engineering manager for Harvey Performance, a manufacturing tool company. Tom likes camping and hiking, craft beer, and home DIY projects. Sara and Tom are happy to share that they're expecting their first child in June!

Nursery Coordinator Needed

The position of Nursery Coordinator was created to provide consistent, quality care to children in our nursery during worship. This person may also provide care before and after worship for children through secondnd grade whose parents are involved in choir, worship preparation, or adult education programs.

The Nursery Coordinator, as a part time employee of the church, will be on site from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. each Sunday of the normal church schedule (10:00 a.m. worship). The position will pay \$15.50/hour. This position will start on Rally Sunday, September 11, 2022.

Applicants for this position should be 18 years of age or older.

If you have any questions about the position, Sue Werst is the CE Ministry Coordinator and the point person for this position.

Parents' Group May 1

All parents of young children are welcome to join us in the nursery after church on the first Sunday of the month for a time of fellowship and faith formation.

Parents' Group is a space for parents and kids—parents get time to connect while their kids play! Come discuss the joys and trials of parenting, reflect on a spiritual topic for the day, and pray together.

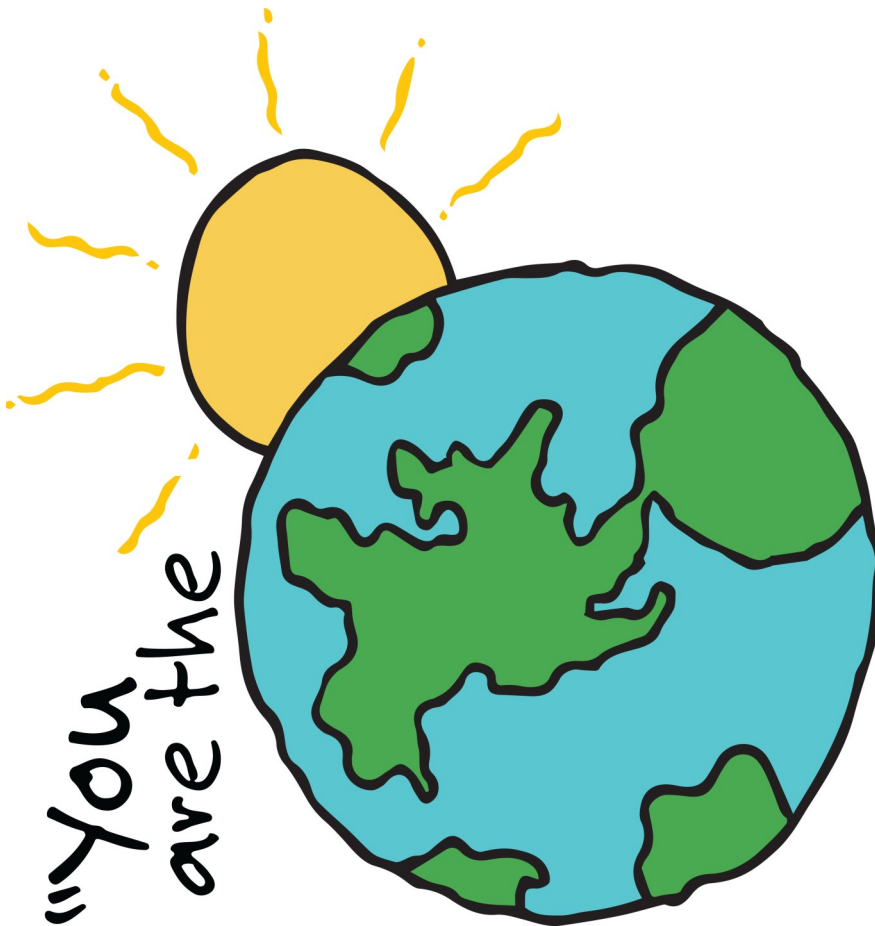
This month, Parents' Group is discussing friendship — how do we make friends, how do our kids make friends, what does the Bible have to say about the value of friendship? Join us for a discussion about how we value relationships every day.

Parents' Group is a welcoming space, open to people who attend our church, or any church, or none at all! For more information, email Pastor Kate.

The Congregational Church
of Amherst, NH, UCC
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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"You
are the
light of the world."

Matthew 5:14