

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

# VILLAGE SPIRE

May 2023



## Singing

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor  
May 2023



## ANNUAL MEETING

This year's annual meeting will be  
**Sunday, May 21**

After the worship service, we'll enjoy a brief time of fellowship and coffee, and the meeting will begin around 11:30 a.m. in the community room and on Zoom.

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

Copies of the 2022-2023 Annual Report will be made available by May 14.



## Levi Sunday is May 7

Wear your work clothes to church and join us after worship for our annual spring cleaning day. We have our usual spring projects such as yard clean up, spreading mulch and sweeping/cleaning the parking lot. We also have some fallen trees that need taking care of, the front walk needs weeding, and the parsonage picket fence could use a paint touch up. Bring your own tools for the jobs you want to tackle. Many hands make light work!

What makes your heart sing? It's telling that when we consider what moves us – our passions, our joys, our loves – we frame it in terms of song. We think of our very heart and soul singing out in delight. Music moves us in surprising ways. Unlike any other artform, it elicits emotion and memory and meaning that defy explanation. Hearing a particular melody, movement or hymn can instantly transport us back in time, cause tears to well up in our eyes, or string a connection between what we're wrestling with and the clarification we seek. For this reason, it's easy to understand why music has been a part of worship since human beings first turned their eyes and hearts to God. The book of Psalms that we have in our Bible is essentially a hymnal – a collection of songs that the ancient people of Israel sang to their God. It includes songs of praise, songs of lament, and songs of hope. When we bring our whole selves before God, we bring our emotions, our memories, our longings, and music helps us to express all three in ways that our well-crafted words and heart-felt prayers often can't.

This month our Creative Worship service (on May 21) focuses on the part of our service that is the most meaningful part of worship for many of us: the music. It may come as no surprise that the results of the Congregational Assessment survey (CAT) that we took prior to the pandemic revealed that our congregation has a strong love of music, with the majority of participants overwhelmingly agreeing with the statement, "The music at our church is outstanding in quality and appropriate in style to

*Continued on page 3*

## The Racial Justice Group Welcomes YOU!

The Racial Justice Group is dedicated to learning about the impact of racism and acting to bring about God's love and justice in and beyond our community. Through reading, discussion and service, CCA's Racial Justice Group seeks to live more fully into Christ's call to love our neighbor as ourselves.

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! Contact any of the RJG members (Steve Boczenowski, Sally Bowkett, Gail Miller, Lee Bowley, Stuart Coon, Linda Lannin, Sheryl Gottwald, and Joan Egbertson) to learn more about the exciting things CCA's Racial Justice Group is doing this spring, or to hear about how their antiracism journey has increased their faith.

## VILLAGE SPIRE

A Parish Newsletter

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](http://www.ccamherst.org)  
[Facebook.com/ccamherst](https://www.facebook.com/ccamherst)  
[Instagram.com/ccamherstnh](https://www.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 newsletter articles  
by the fifteenth of the month.

Items for the Sunday bulletin  
are due Thursday morning.

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### OUR CHURCH STAFF:

Rev. Maureen R. Frescott  
*Senior Pastor*  
[pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org)

Rev. Katherine R. Kennedy  
*Associate Pastor*  
[pastorkate@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastorkate@ccamherst.org)

Andrea Cyr  
*Church Office Administrator*  
[andrea@ccamherst.org](mailto:andrea@ccamherst.org)

Sara L. Phelps  
*Director of Music*  
[kalben1@comcast.net](mailto:kalben1@comcast.net)

Michael Havay  
*Organist*  
[michaelh117@gmail.com](mailto:michaelh117@gmail.com)

Wendy Valeri  
*Bell Choir Director*  
[wendylazott@tds.net](mailto:wendylazott@tds.net)

Larissa Riley  
*Church School Coordinator*  
[churchschool@ccamherst.org](mailto:churchschool@ccamherst.org)



## "His Eye is On the Sparrow"

### Woman's Association's Annual Meeting and Potluck Salad Luncheon

WA members and friends are invited to attend our celebration of Spring and the year's accomplishments on Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:30 a.m. in the Vestry. For generations the WA has been a contributor to our church and community, and for generations our friends and church family have been by our side helping us reach our goals. Our success is due to your support, so please come and share our joy!

The brief meeting portion of the morning will include President Adrienne Topliffe's Annual Report and Installation of Officers, which will be followed by a potluck lunch of salads and desserts.

Please contact Judi Dunbar at (603) 673-2823 or [judidunbar@aol.com](mailto:judidunbar@aol.com) to sign up and prevent a duplication of dishes.

### New Members and Visitors Info Sessions May 3 and May 11 7:00 p.m.



Are you NEW (or not-so-new) to our church and interested in learning more about our congregation? Are you interested in learning more about becoming a member? Do you want to know more about the UCC? If so, please join us for one of our info sessions on either Wednesday, May 3 or Thursday, May 11 at 7:00 p.m. to learn more about all of the above!

The sessions will be held on ZOOM to make it easier for all to attend. For those who've already joined our mailing list and/or inquired about becoming a member, you'll be hearing from us soon! If you've joined us for our in-person or online worship over the last year and are interested in attending one of our info sessions please reach out to Andrea in our church office at [andrea@ccamherst.org](mailto:andrea@ccamherst.org) or 673-3231, or contact Pastor Maureen at [pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org)



### Financial Summary

(as of March 31, 2023)

	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$347,623	\$332,632	\$14,991
Expenses	\$350,774	\$354,038	\$ (3,264)
Net Income	\$ (3,152)	\$ (21,406)	\$18,255

*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 (Treasurer), Doug Topliffe, Todd Whitney and Tim Wiegand.*

## ***Singing***, continued from page 1

our congregation." We are blessed to have an incredibly gifted and passionate music team here at CCA: our Music Director, Sara Phelps, our organist/pianist, Michael Havay, our Bell Choir Director, Wendy Valeri, who along with our Chancel Choir, Bell Choir, growing children's choir, gifted guest musicians, and all of you who lift your voices in worship, contribute to the joyful noise we offer up to God in worship. Our music team was instrumental (no pun intended) in keeping our worship alive during the pandemic, recording new pieces in their homes and searching through previously recorded pieces of our Chancel Choir to include in our online worship. Hearing those familiar voices and familiar tunes brought comfort to many as we worshiped apart from one another. But it also left us longing for the day when we would be back singing, ringing, and moving together in our sanctuary. For many of us, music is how we worship. While the other elements of worship are valued, without the music our hearts struggle to sing. Which is why we're devoting an entire Creative Worship service to celebrating the many ways we "sing out" to God.

May 21st is also New Member Sunday. We'll welcome some new and familiar faces as we publicly proclaim our commitment to walking together as a community of Christ. You may have noticed the increase in little ones coming up for our Children's Time during worship. This is a reflection of the number of new families that have moved into our community over the last several years. Our Children and Youth programs are singing with the voices of children, and we celebrate the energy and joy they and their families bring. We also celebrate the couples and individuals who have found their way to our church, many of whom began watching our online service, or spent time delving into our website to get a sense of who we are, or who happened to see the "Welcome" banner with its rainbow doors strung across our church during the fall, and were intrigued to know and be a part of a faith community that offered such a welcome to all. We will raise our congregational voice in song on New Member's Sunday in celebration of the unique presence, gifts, and voices that we all bring to God's table.

May 21st is also our congregation's Annual Meeting, where we'll come together after worship to hear the good news of all that we've done together as a faith community in the past year. We'll also vote on the new budget and election of team members that will help us do even more in the coming year. The "doing" is the work of the church - our outreach, our welcome, our spiritual formation programs, our everyday, nuts and bolts, Zoom meeting and email work that helps us serve God as we feel called to do. But as a church, we sing as well. We sing songs of joy, and praise, and lament, as we bring our whole selves before God - our celebration of the good we're able to offer, our gratitude for what we've been given, our uncertainty over what is to come - balanced with the hope and faith we bring to each.

I truly hope that you're able to join us on May 21st - either in-person or virtually - as we celebrate the many ways that we sing - and lift up a joyful noise to God!

Peace and blessings,  
*Pastor Maureen*



## **Creative Worship**

Sunday, May 21 at 10:00 a.m.

### **"Singing"**

Mark your calendars! Our May "Creative Worship" is Music Sunday! The theme for our church year is WHY WE WORSHIP! Each month we focus on a different part of our worship service and explore how it connects with our faith.

In May, our theme is "Singing" and this month our focus is on the music of worship - the joyful noise we make with our choirs, congregational singing, and the many talented musicians who offer their gifts up to God through our worship. We're also welcoming our New Members during this service, and gathering for our congregation's Annual Meeting afterward. We hope you can join us for this very special Sunday, in-person or online, as we close out the season of Easter!







### 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 group allows for deeper conversations that we can't always have in committee meetings or during coffee hour.

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.

### Choose a Group!

First Tuesday 1:30-3:00 p.m.  
First Sunday 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

All groups will meet in-person or on Zoom as needed.

### 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](http://ccamherst.org) or contact Pastor Maureen at 603-673-3231 x11, [pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org)

This year our Small Groups will focus on the WHY WE WORSHIP theme that is guiding our Creative Worship and other church programs. Each month we'll focus on a different aspect of our worship and how it connects with our faith journey!

### Remaining Schedule for 2023

May: Singing  
June: Nurturing

## Adult Ed Series: Understanding the New Testament Wednesdays, May 3 and 17 10:00-11:30 a.m. on Zoom



Why do we have four Gospels? Why do they contradict each other at times? What was the purpose of Paul's letters? What is the Book of Revelation really about? Join us as we take a year-long look at the New Testament through this video lecture series produced by The Great Courses. We'll examine the original contexts of these writings and the people who wrote them, giving us a new perspective on these ancient texts. We'll watch the video together as a group and then have a discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. The class meets every first and third Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom. Contact [pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org) to receive the Zoom link, or access it on our church website in the Members section under "Wednesday Adult Ed."

### A New Look at the New Testament - Remaining Series Schedule

May 3: Luke and Acts: Luke's Inclusive Message  
May 17: Acts: The Apostles and the Church



## Amherst Town-Wide Clean-Up Day Saturday, May 6 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Join us as CCA participates in the Amherst Town-Wide Clean-Up Day on Saturday, May 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.! Our assigned clean-up location is Horace Greeley Road (beginning at Austin Road). Meet at the church to carpool or meet us there. Trash bags and gloves will be provided by the town at the church and on-site. Filled bags will be dropped off on the town green. We're encouraged to wear bright colors to keep everyone safe. CCA is proud to be a co-sponsor this year and all are welcome to participate!

## Meet Wendy Valeri, Lifelong Bell Ringer

Wendy Valeri will be stepping down as Bell Choir Director at the end of this month, a position she has held for 13 years. But Wendy's participation as a bell ringer at our church began over four decades ago. She grew up in Amherst and is the third generation of her family to be a CCA member. Her maternal grandparents, Frank and Ruth Whaland, were members, as is her mother, Judi Dunbar.

Wendy began ringing bells when she joined the Children's Bell Choir at age nine. It was during rehearsals that she and the other choir members learned how to play the bells. At age thirteen Wendy volunteered to serve as the Director of the Youth Bell Choir, which was made up of eight or nine girls. Following her tenure in that position she took time off from ringing, but eventually joined the Adult Bell Choir over twenty years ago, then led by Kim Vars Whitehead. When Kim left in 2010, Wendy was named *Interim* Bell Choir Director, but the Interim designation was soon dropped.

As director of the choir, Wendy finds coordinating schedules the most challenging part of the position. The Bell Choir normally plays one Sunday a month. Wendy needs to select appropriate pieces and make sure that there will be enough ringers to play on that day. Pieces that require three octaves of bells need at least nine ringers, but there are also two octave pieces available that require fewer bells. Wendy not only directs the choir, but also often rings, sometimes ringing double bells, and occasionally she performs solos.

The COVID-19 epidemic temporarily suspended the Bell Choir performances at church, but it provided Wendy with a different creative outlet. She trucked the bells to her house and figured out how to record videos of herself playing solos, which she then emailed to Pastor Maureen, who included them in the pre-recorded services. During the pandemic Wendy communicated on Facebook with other bellringers who exchanged ideas and tips about recording performances. Since large bell choirs weren't able to play during COVID, Wendy found it helpful that bell composers were writing more solo and small choir pieces, which were in demand. As time went on, Wendy became more technically sophisticated and was able to record pieces from her home in Lyndeborough accompanied by our organist, Michael, who played the piano from his home in Hollis. While recording her performances at home she could edit out any mistakes that she made, so she found herself doing multiple takes to try to achieve perfection. When live performances resumed at church, Wendy experienced some performance anxiety at first, since she realized that if she made any mistakes, they couldn't be corrected with a retake. But she soon got over that concern.

An increased travel schedule at Wendy's job at Fidelity Investments as Director of Candidate Experience, where she leads a team of hiring managers, has caused Wendy to make the decision to resign as Bell Choir Director. Bell Choir member, Cheryl Gagne, will replace Wendy as Director. However, Wendy won't be leaving the bells altogether. She foresees herself as a "permanent sub" for the choir and hopes to be able to play more duets with Michael in the future.

Our church services have been enhanced for many years by the Bell Choir performances thanks to Wendy's talent, commitment and leadership.

*Written by Adrienne Topliffe*

## Kentucky Derby Social Saturday, May 6

Wear your favorite derby hat/ attire and join us on Saturday, **May 6** at 5:30 p.m. for this fun annual event, hosted by Sue and Bruce Manchester along with the Fellowship team. All generations are welcome and if weather cooperates we will have bubbles and yard games for the kiddos. This is a potluck style event: last names A-L please bring a side dish or a salad; M-Z please bring an appetizer or dessert. BYOB.

Please RSVP to Meredith Dart: email [meredith.dart@astellas.com](mailto:meredith.dart@astellas.com), or via text or call (603) 305-9065.

## SHARE Food Pantry

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

### May 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!

## Church School Schedule May-June

May 7: Church School  
May 14: Church School  
May 21: Church School  
May 28: Memorial Day Weekend  
(No Church School)  
June 4: \*\*Children's Sunday\*\*

We hope everyone can attend this special worship service. This is the last day of the church school year. It will also be Confirmation Sunday and Pastor Kate's last Sunday. After worship we will gather for a special fellowship time!



## Middle High Youth Group (MHYG)

MHYG meets on May 7<sup>th</sup>! It's SPRING folks! Time to get outside, play ultimate frisbee, and think about the nature of transitions and how to do them well. Come to MHYG in May for a lot of fun, good conversation about how we approach change, and, as always, a bit of prayer, too.

At a time in life when most tweens are figuring 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 middle schoolers are invited, and bringing friends is strongly encouraged!

Email Pastor Kate for more information.

## Vacation Bible School is August 14-18, 2023!



### **Registration is now open:**

Summer is just around the corner, and we can't wait for VBS! All details and registration information for preschoolers through rising fifth graders can be found on our VBS website: <https://vbspro.events/p/events/ccamherst>

### **Volunteers are needed:**

Middle school and high school students are invited to join the fun as youth volunteers. If your child would like to participate, please let us know!

We have many opportunities for adults to help with VBS. While some adults are needed as leaders for activities during the week of VBS, others are needed before and after VBS to prepare materials, decorate, set up, and clean up. If you are interested in helping, please contact Larissa Riley or Gretchen Davis so we can talk about the role that best fits your skills, interests and availability.

### **Contact information:**

If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please email [churchschool@ccamherst.org](mailto:churchschool@ccamherst.org).



## Children's and Confirmation Sunday Is June 4

Save the date! On Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup> we are celebrating all of the youth in our church school program, from kindergarten all the way through Confirmation. Come to this joy-infused worship service to honor the work of our church school teachers, the journey of our confirmands, and the learning of our children, followed by cake and ice-cream sundaes in our community room. What's not to love?!

## Senior High Youth Group (SHYG)

May is Mission Trip Prep month! Come to SHYG to get closer to the SHYGers that you will be going to New Orleans with, and to get your head and your heart in the game for a wonderful week of service.

### SHYG May Schedule:

May 7: SHYG Meeting, 4-5:30pm  
May 14: NO SHYG—Mother's Day  
May 21: Mission Trip Info Session, 3:30-4pm; SHYG Meeting, 4-5:30pm  
May 28: NO SHYG—Memorial Day Weekend

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 for more information!

## Congregational Church of Amherst Fundraiser



Ecosmith Recyclers Inc. and Congregational Church are proud to partner in hosting a fundraising clothing and shoe drive.

Raise money to support your local church by donating new or used articles of clothing, pairs of shoes, and household textiles.



# CLOTHING & SHOE DRIVE

### WHAT TO DONATE

- Shirts
- Jeans
- Pants
- Shorts
- Sweaters
- Jackets
- Socks
- Dresses
- Skirts
- Bed linen
- Purses
- Backpacks
- Hats
- Scarves
- Belts
- Sneakers
- Sandals
- Dress Shoes
- Boots
- Towels

PLEASE BAG SHOES AND CLOTHING  
SEPARATELY

### WHEN

**April 28<sup>th</sup> through May 12<sup>th</sup>**

### WHERE

**Meeting Place Plaza**  
199 Route 101, Amherst, NH

### CONTACT

**Colleen Cushing**  
[colleencushing54@gmail.com](mailto:colleencushing54@gmail.com)

All collected material is destined for export to less advantaged persons in developing nations around the world.



The Congregational Church  
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11 Church Street  
Amherst, NH 03031

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