

# VILLAGE SPIRE

September 2023



## The Stories of Our Faith

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor  
September 2023

*Why were Adam and Eve tossed out of the Garden of Eden?*

*How did Noah fit all of those animals in the ark?*

*Did David really defeat Goliath with just a slingshot and a rock?*

Some of us may recall hearing these iconic Bible stories when we were children and asking all the “who, what, why, how, and when” questions we could think of. As adults, it’s rare to hear a sermon preached on these stories in worship, as they’re typically left out of the lectionary we follow on Sunday mornings. Which means we may miss out on hearing and peeling back the layers of these stories from an adult perspective. When we look at these stories through more mature eyes, we may ask different questions:

*Why would God create us to be curious beings and then punish us for seeking knowledge?*

*Why would a loving and merciful God flood all of creation in an effort to wipe the slate clean?*

*Does God really choose sides in battle - favoring the small over the mighty?*

*Continued on page 3*

## Rally Day

Sunday, September 10

## Fellowship Picnic

After the worship service on September 10, we hope you will join us for an all-church picnic!

Immediately following the 10:00 a.m. worship service, head to the community room to enjoy good food, games, renew friendships and make new ones. The Fellowship Team will provide hamburgers, hot dogs and cold drinks. If your last name begins A-N please bring a dessert to share; O-Z a side or salad.

All ages are welcome and donations to help with costs are appreciated.



## Blessing of the Backpacks

On Rally Day, **Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>** we are inviting all children, youth, and adults to bring their school backpacks or work bags to church for a special Back-to-School blessing during our 10:00 a.m. service. Our pastors will offer a blessing for all the students and teachers, and both the children and adults will receive a special tag to keep on their backpacks as a reminder of the blessing throughout the year.



## Church School Starts on September 10<sup>th</sup>

We are excited for a new year of Church School to begin on September 10<sup>th</sup>! All children in preschool through 7<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to join us each Sunday. New children are always welcome, so feel free to invite friends and neighbors.

The children will be divided into three classes this year:

- \* **PreK-K** (3-year-olds through kindergarteners)
- \* **Elementary** (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade)
- \* **Middle School** (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade)

Children will sit in the pews with their families for the first part of the worship service. At Children’s Time, they will be called forward for a special interactive message with one of the pastors. Then the children will stay up front to listen to the Chancel Choir’s anthem and then “Pass the Peace.” Teachers will lead the children to the classrooms for the remainder of the service. After worship, teachers will walk the children downstairs to the community room, where they will join their families for fellowship.

The [2023-2024 Church School Registration Form](#) must be completed for each child. The forms will be available on Rally Day, or you can download one from the church website. If you have any questions about church school, please contact the Church School Coordinator, Larissa Riley, at [churchschool@ccamherst.org](mailto:churchschool@ccamherst.org).

## 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. Prescott  
*Senior Pastor*  
[pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org)

Kevin G. S. Marsh  
*Acting Associate Pastor*  
[pastorkevin@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastorkevin@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)

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



### 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.

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)

## The Stories of Our Faith



This year our Small Groups will focus on the STORIES OF OUR FAITH theme that is guiding our Creative Worship and other church programs. Each month we'll focus on a different beloved Bible story and how it connects with our faith journey!

### Schedule for 2023-2024

October:	The Garden of Eden
November:	Noah and the Ark
December:	Abraham and Sarah
January:	Moses and the Mountain
February:	The Patience of Job
March:	David and Goliath
April:	Mary of Magdala
May:	Saul Becomes Paul
June:	Peter the Rock

## The Church in the Village: Stories About Its People and Its History



We still have a few copies left of the historical booklet containing columns written by Anne Krantz. They are being sold for \$15 (cash or check made out to the church), and can be ordered through the church office.

## ***The Stories of Our Faith,*** continued from page 1

Rally Sunday is September 10<sup>th</sup>, and we're kicking off our 2023-24 program year with a new church-wide theme: "THE STORIES OF OUR FAITH." Our Creative Worship Sundays, our church school children, and our Small Group Ministry gatherings will take time each month to delve into these familiar stories - the Garden of Eden, Noah and the Ark, David and Goliath - as well as the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the mountain, and the patience of Job. We'll also hear the stories of Peter, Paul, and Mary....no, not the 1960's folk group. We'll hear why Jesus nicknamed his bumbling disciple, Peter, "the Rock." We'll learn how the great persecutor, Saul, becomes the great proselytizer, Paul. And we'll hear how Mary of Magdala came to be burdened with a bad reputation, rather than celebrated as the first to "see" Jesus and share the Good News with the world.

In celebration of Rally Day, we'll also be welcoming our choirs, our church school, and many of you, back to worship, as we transition from our summer sabbaths to the reinvigorated energy and activities of fall. Summer brought special music in worship, a successful week-long VBS for our children, and opportunities to watch or listen to our Sunday service from afar, as we puttered in the garden, sat lakeside or by the pool, or went for a walk in the world. We're looking forward to welcoming many of you back to our sanctuary, as you're able, as we return to our 10:00 a.m. worship time and reconnect during our coffee hour and through our ministry teams, our small groups and adult education, our children and youth programs, our choir rehearsals, and our wonderful Woman's Association.

With Pastor Kate's departure last June, we're also welcoming a new Acting Associate Pastor, Kevin Marsh. Kevin is a recent seminary grad who has a passion for ministry for all ages. Kevin will lead our middle school and senior high youth groups, our Confirmation class, and share the pulpit and pastoral duties as well. Kevin joined us in mid-August - helping out with our Vacation Bible School and joining us in worship, and we'll have an opportunity to hear him preach for us for the first time on Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Be sure to check out his bio in this *Spire* (and on our website) and we hope you can be with us in September to welcome him in person!

Finally, in celebration of our re-gathering this September, you'll see our familiar "Welcome" banner hanging on the front of our church, with its rainbow-colored doors emblazoned with the words "God's Doors are Open to All." While this banner and its message may be familiar to those within our church, it continues to reach those standing on the outside in unexpected ways. If you talk to some of our newer members who've joined us over the last 3-4 years, they'll tell you that seeing this banner on the front of our church is what brought them here. Some were new to the area and were seeking a church as open and welcoming as the one they left behind. Some had never attended a UCC church but were seeking a faith community where their children would learn that everyone of us is a beloved child of God. And some had not darkened the doorstep of a church in years, or ever, believing that they or their family would not be welcome in a house of God.

The stories of our faith teach us that God is always calling us - calling us into relationship, calling us to gather as a community, calling us to be a loving and compassionate presence to others, calling us to step outside our comfort zones to ensure that those standing on the outside know that God's doors truly are open to all.

**If you're new, welcome.**

**If you're returning to us, welcome back.**

**And for all who need to hear it... welcome home.**

Peace and blessings,  
*Pastor Maureen*

## **Fellowship Team Needs Your Help**

Our Fellowship Team works together throughout the year to put on the many fun church activities we enjoy: the Rally Day Picnic, Game Night, the Kentucky Derby Party, to name a few. They also put the kettle on every Sunday so that after worship we can enjoy coffee and tea while greeting friends.

This small, but mighty group could use a few more members to help balance the workload and to bring fresh ideas to the group.

If you're interested, please contact Meredith Dart,  
[meredith.dart@astellas.com](mailto:meredith.dart@astellas.com).





## Youth Choirs

Do you enjoy singing, but you have a few questions about what is involved? Read on!

### **How many choirs are there for kids in our church?**

There are two opportunities for children to sing with a choir.

The **Youth Choir** is for young children and we meet in the vestry right after church on Sundays (beginning on September 17). Most children are between the ages of 4 and 10. We learn music through games and activities.

**Voices of Creation** is our choir for older kids, the music is geared toward pre-teen and teen voices. We use printed music and learn to follow parts. The music has more of a contemporary feel, age appropriate and fun to learn.

### **Do I have to sing a solo in front of everyone?**

No, we will be singing as a group.

### **Do I have to wear a robe?**

The Youth Choir will be robed. Historically, Voices of Creation (VOC) wears black top, black pants.

### **How often do we sing in church?**

I am hoping to have the Youth Choir sing once a month. Once we get started with rehearsals I will have a better sense of the schedule for both choirs.

### **When does Voices of Creation meet?**

That hasn't been decided yet. Once I have a list of interested singers I will communicate via email.

Please reach out to me to "sign up" for a choir! See you on Rally Day, September 10.

See you all soon!

*Sara Phelps*

Director of Music

(603) 759-6468

kalben1@comcast.net



## Hello from Pastor Kevin

Hello to my new church family at the Congregational Church of Amherst!

My name is Kevin, and I am overjoyed to be joining your faith community as your new Acting Associate Pastor! I hope this short letter will let you get to know me while I also attempt to get to know every one of you.

I am currently commuting from the south end of the greater Boston area where I live with my partner, Emmanuel, and our oddly friendly

hedgehog, Francis, until we are all able to relocate to New Hampshire. I grew up in the small rural town of Gratis, Ohio, which is just about an hour north of Cincinnati. I was raised in church in a tradition that held very strict and rigid views about what God and the Bible said, and after a long process of deconstructing my faith and building it back up, I found a life affirming spiritual home in the United Church of Christ in January of 2020. I am a recent graduate of Yale Divinity School, where I earned my Master of Divinity this past spring.

In ministry, I care deeply about fostering creativity in worship and Christian practice, engaging young people with the Christian tradition, social justice ministry, and engaging our wider community through outreach ministry. As a pastor, I am drawn to teaching, preaching, and relationship building. In my personal life, I love taking care of my houseplants, crafting and sewing (recently I have been teaching myself how to make ceramic cast coasters), Taylor Swift's entire music library, playing my acoustic guitar, and playing board games.

I hope to learn more about you all soon, and ask that you will be patient as I attempt to learn hundreds of names in the near future.

Blessings and peace,

*Pastor Kevin*

## CHOIR NEWS



## Adult Choirs

The Chancel Choir and the Bell Choir will resume rehearsals on Thursday, September 7th!

The Chancel Choir rehearses at 7:30 p.m. in the vestry.

The Bell Choir rehearses at 6:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

If you are interested in singing or ringing, please contact Sara Phelps, Director of Music, at

[kalben1@comcast.net](mailto:kalben1@comcast.net);

(603) 759-6468

## Confirmands Help Women in Need

On June 10, the 2023 Confirmation class carried out a mission project to help the residents of a women's shelter located at Tirrell House in Manchester. This is believed to be the first outreach project undertaken by a Confirmation class at our church. Meredith Dart, the mother of confirmand Oriannah Dart, thought it was important for the confirmands to "give back," so she volunteered her time to coordinate the project. She noted that all the confirmands' parents were "very supportive."

Meredith first contacted the Director of Tirrell House to find out the needs of the residents and learned that new undergarments and socks were especially needed. The five confirmands, Oriannah Dart, Libby Kennedy, Phoebe Handwerk, Maya Gascoyne and Adelia Curtis, shopped for undergarments and socks at Ocean State Job Lots. The \$320 they spent there on over eighty items was donated by the Woman's Association. The girls also prepared a meal for the residents. They each bought ingredients for a dinner of chicken, mashed potatoes, salad, bread, and dessert, then prepared and cooked the meal in our church kitchen. They then brought the food to Tirrell House, where they set up and served the meal to 23 residents and delivered the garments. During their visit, Meredith and the confirmands learned that the shelter would be forced to close at the end of June due to lack of funding. On that date 15 residents needed to find other places to live.

Confirmand Maya gave her thoughts on the project:

*"Helping the women in the Tirrell House was a greatly fulfilling experience. It feels good to know we've made a difference in someone else's life, even if it's a small one. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to make a positive impact in my community."*

Although this was the first Confirmation class mission project, Pastor Maureen hopes that this type of outreach will be included in the classes going forward.

*By Adrienne Topliffe with contributions from Meredith Dart.*



## Confirmation is Back!

### Calling all 8th and 9th Graders—

Have you ever wondered what it means to be "Confirmed?"

Confirmation is a very special year for 8th and 9th graders at the Congregational Church of Amherst. Our Confirmation program invites teens to go deeper in their own spirituality as they transition from childhood to adulthood, and build a deeper relationship with God, their church, and their peers along the way.

Our **first meeting and parent information session** is **Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup>** from

**6:30-7:30 p.m.** (we may adjust this time once we reach out to you – stay tuned!). Our Confirmation leaders

are Pastor Kevin, Pastor Maureen, Vicky Leknes, and Sally Bowkett

Reach out to Pastor Kevin ([pastorkevin@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastorkevin@ccamherst.org)) for more information.

We hope you can join us!



A big thank you to Alice and Brian Handwerk. They donated a garden cart to us last year, and it has been a huge help. It has made our gardeners' work so much easier.

Thank you! Your generosity is much appreciated!!



## No Fall Good Stuff Sale

The Woman's Association will not be holding a Good Stuff Sale this fall. The next sale will be held on April 26 & 27, 2024.

Unfortunately, due to storage limitations, we will not be able to accept any donations for that sale until sometime after the new year.

Details about what, when and where to donate items to next spring's Good Stuff Sale will appear in church publications in early 2024.



## Woman's Association's Monday Meetings Resume

The weekly Monday Morning Workshops of the Woman's Association will resume on September 11<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 10:00 in the church vestry. The workshops are informal meetings at which members and friends of the WA gather to plan events, such as the upcoming Holiday Fair, or to just enjoy the fellowship of the group. Those who can stay past noon should bring their own lunch. Coffee, tea and dessert are always provided.

All church and community women are welcome to attend on any Monday. Anyone with questions about the Woman's Association or the workshop can contact Adrienne Topliffe at 673-7436 or [abtopliffe@comcast.net](mailto:abtopliffe@comcast.net).

**Photo:** On July 1st at 12:00 noon, our church and community took part in reading Frederick Douglass' famous speech, "What to the Slave is Your Fourth of July?" Sponsored by the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire, we were one of many communities taking part in this reading across the state.

## Racial Justice Group

By Sally Bowkett

*"You don't know, what you don't know." Socrates*

When the world went into shutdown in March of 2020, our pastors and staff kept the lights on, learned how to Zoom and streamed our Sunday services. We delighted in watching Pastor Maureen, as if by video magic, Zoom around the church by the snap of her fingers. Pastor Kate too offered innovative ways to keeping our youth engaged and the parents group alive.

When Pastor Kate offered a book group by Zoom on race/race relations, many of us signed on and "Zoomed in." Our first book of many was *"Waking Up White,"* by a white woman named Debbie Irving. For some of us, the book was a true eye opener. We began peeling back the layers of history of what we didn't know, learning uncomfortable truths that were hurtful and hateful. We "woke up" to the truth that opportunities that were available to white people weren't available to black or brown people, indigenous people or people of color. For us to take a look in the mirror and acknowledge that we too unconsciously could have and did perpetuate systemic racism was an uncomfortable reflection.

We continued to peel back the layers of racism in our country and the rise of white supremacy. As the British writer C.S. Lewis once wrote, "you can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending." We can seek to know what we don't know. We can speak out, we can speak up and stand against racial injustice; injustices that are seen and those that are not seen like "redlining." The more we can peel back the layers of systemic racism, the more we can help the "arc of the moral universe" bend toward equal justice, fairness and opportunities for all people. After learning about racial injustice, we never want to go back to "not knowing." Come, take the journey with us!

Blessings to all, *Sally Bowkett* for the Racial Justice Group.

Members are Sheryl Gottwald, Stephen Boczenowski, Lee Bowley, Gail Miller, Stuart Coons, Joan Egbertson and Linda Lannin. May our future be one of faith in what is morally right and just for all.

PS: For two years, we have teamed up with the Racial Unity Team in NH for the Art and Poetry Contest. We have teamed up with the Black Heritage Trail and held for the second year the Frederick Douglass Reading in July. It is our hope to be possibly hosting The Sacred Ally Quilts in our community room in February of 2024. We will be creating a library of books about race, white supremacy and anti racism. Some of the books we suggest you might want to read to start your journey are *"Waking Up White,"* *"Me and White Supremacy"* and *"The Black Friend."*



## Understanding the New Testament

### Wednesday Morning Adult Ed

Continues September 20<sup>th</sup>  
10:00-11:30 a.m. on Zoom

Why do we have four Gospels? Why do they contradict each other at times? What is the Book of Revelation really about? This fall, we're continuing our year-long look at the New Testament with the Great Courses video lecture series. We'll begin with a review of the gospels we covered last spring (Mark, Matthew, Luke) and then move on to the Gospel of John, the letters NOT written by Paul, and the Book of Revelation. We'll examine the original contexts of these books and the people who wrote them, giving us a new perspective on these ancient writings.

We'll watch the video together as a group and then have a discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. The class will meet every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. from September through May. We'll meet on Zoom because we've found this to be a more inclusive way to be together! All are welcome! Please RSVP to [pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org) to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the members' section under "Wednesday Adult Ed."



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

September 20 - "Gospel of John: Jesus as the Divine Word"  
October 4 - "Gospel of John: Jesus and the Jews"  
October 18 - "The Community of John after the Gospel"  
November 1 - "Galatians: Salvation for Gentiles"  
November 15 - "The Abraham Letters: Hebrews and James"  
December 6 - "Churches in Crisis in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and Jude"  
December 20 - "New Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles"  
January 17 - "Revelation: Envisioning God's Reality"  
February 7 - "The Quest for Unity in the New Testament"

## Creative Worship

Third Sunday of the Month  
10:00 a.m.

Mark your calendars! "Creative Worship" returns in the fall on the THIRD SUNDAY of every month.

This year we're celebrating THE STORIES OF OUR FAITH! Each month we'll focus on a different beloved story from our Bible and the message it has for all ages.

Our Creative Worship services step outside our traditional order of worship with special music and interactive liturgies and activities. On these Sundays, our children participate in the beginning of the service before heading off to church school to engage the story in a new way.

We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!

September 17	The Garden of Eden
October 15	Noah and the Ark
November 19	Abraham and Sarah
December 17	Mary and Joseph
January 21	Moses and the Mountain
February 18	The Patience of Job
March 17	David and Goliath
April 21	Mary of Magdala
May 19	Saul and Paul
June 9	Peter the Rock



## SHARE Food Pantry

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

### September Pantry Requests:



toothbrushes,  
toothpaste, bar soap,  
deodorants,  
shampoo,  
conditioner, feminine  
hygiene products,  
diapers, 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!

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

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FOR WHERE TWO OR  
THREE ARE GATHERED  
IN MY NAME, I AM  
THERE AMONG THEM.

MATTHEW 18:20, NRSV



**Save the Date!**



# **Holiday Fair**

**Saturday November 18th**

**Congregational Church**

**11 Church St. Amherst**



**Treasures  
Bakery  
Silent Auction**

**Cabot Cheese**

**Birch Houses  
Jewelry**

**Pecans**



**Wreaths**



**Raffle Baskets**

**Knits**

**Crafts**

# September 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1)	2)
3) 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	4)  	5) 4:30 Church Council	6) 9:30 Staff Meeting	7) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	8)	9)
10) RALLY DAY 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship/Picnic	11) 10:00 WA Workshop	12) 10:00 WA Board Meeting 7:00 Diaconate 7:00 Trustees of the Facility	13) 6:00 Budget & Finance Team	14) 9:30 Congregational Care 4:00 Communications Team 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	15)	16)
17) 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Christian Ed	18) 10:00 WA Workshop	19)	20) 10:00 Wednesday Morning Study Group	21) 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class Parents Meeting 7:30 Chancel Choir	22)	23)
24) 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir	25) 10:00 WA Workshop 7:00 World Service Team	26)	27) 9:30 Staff Meeting	28) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	29)	30)