

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



*"The house lights go off and the footlights come on. In the orchestra pit,
the violin bows are poised. The conductor has raised the baton.
You hold your breath to listen. The extraordinary thing that is about to happen
is matched only by the extraordinary moment just before it happens.
Advent is the name of that moment."*

— Frederick Buechner

THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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

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

December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent

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

Prepare Thyself, Zion

J.S. Bach/H. Robert James

INTROIT

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Stephen, Kelly, Zeke and Eli Isaacs

The congregation may remain seated.

One: We light candles for the four weeks leading to Christmas
in anticipation of the inbreaking of God's love and light in Jesus.

One: Now, on this first Sunday of Advent, we wait.

Many: For the inbreaking God is coming to us.

(The first candle of Advent is lit.)

One: In the coming weeks, in this season of waiting, we will listen.

Many: For the inbreaking Word brings us good news.

One: In the waiting and listening, we will keep watch.

Many: For the inbreaking Spirit is moving among us.

One: In the waiting, listening, and watching, we will say, "Yes!"

**Many: For the inbreaking God, Word, and Spirit will be born once again in our hearts and
in our world!**

*HYMN

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?

No. 11

Please rise as you are able in body or spirit.

UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION and THE LORD'S PRAYER (unison)

The congregation may be seated.

**Holy One, during this season of Advent
you will shake the heavens and the earth,
you will cry out in the wilderness,
you will dream dreams and sing songs of hope,
you will leap in the womb in anticipation.
Today we invite you to turn our world upside down.
To shake us out of our comfort and complacency.
To inspire us to tear down the structures that serve as barriers.
To provoke us to break the chains that hold us all captive.**

**God of Advent, today we wait with hope,
knowing that in your inbreaking all are made free and created anew.
Be present with us, as we pray the words Jesus taught us:**

**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.

TIME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

ANTHEM

E'en so, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come
Chancel Choir

Paul Manz

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

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

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Mark 13:24-37

“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know

that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

SERMON

“Night Watch”

*HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

No. 9

JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYER

If you have a prayer to share, fill out a prayer card in your pew. Cards will be collected by one of the pastors during the hymn after the sermon, and will be shared during Joys and Concerns.

CHORAL RESPONSE

INVITATION TO SHARE OUR OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Reflection on “Conditor alme siderum”

David Lasky

*DOXOLOGY (Tune: *From All That Dwell Below the Skies*)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God all creatures here below. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Praise God above, ye heavenly host;

Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

God who makes all things new, we believe in the power of hope to dispel our fear, to heal our despair, to change our world for the better. We offer these gifts with faith that a new day is coming. May our offerings be used to bring about your hope for justice and peace throughout creation. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

We welcome all people to join in receiving this sacrament. Children may participate at the discretion of their parents.

CALL TO COMMUNION

One: God be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God most high.

Many: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

COMMUNION PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

BREAKING OF THE BREAD and POURING OF THE CUP

CONSECRATING PRAYER

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Communion at CCA is open to anyone who would like to partake. When you receive the bread, eat at your own pace, symbolizing our individual relationship with God. When you receive the juice, drink with the whole congregation, symbolizing our communion as the Body of Christ. The bread is gluten, egg, and dairy free and the juice is non-alcoholic, so that there may be no barriers to Christ's table.

ORGAN MEDITATION

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Rowland H. Prichard/
Gregory Hamilton

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Mark Roberts

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (in unison)

We give thanks, loving God, for feeding us at this table. Send us out into the world as your children, full of courage, compassion, and commitment, and eager to be Christ's church in the world. Amen.

*HYMN

We Hail You God's Anointed

inside back page

*THE LIGHT OF CHRIST GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD

*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

*POSTLUDE

Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying

Philipp Nicolai/
Gilbert M. Martin

*(*Please rise as you are able in body or spirit.)*

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 available for children Pre-K through grade 7.
- Our church nursery is staffed and available for parents with young children.
- Joys and Concerns may be written on the cards found in the pews. You are also welcome to submit your prayer request through our website in advance of the worship service.
- Please remember to wear your nametag each Sunday, so that we may all greet our neighbors. If you do not have a permanent nametag, temporary nametags may be found inside the friendship registers. If you are in need of a new, permanent nametag, please see one of the deacons.
- Please join us in the community room for a time of fellowship after the worship service. Coffee and beverages are offered.
- In the event of an emergency, please remain seated until instructions have been given. An emergency plan is in place for the children in the church school.

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 WORSHIP SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church
Rev. Maureen R. Frescott
Kevin G. S. Marsh
Sara L. Phelps
Michael Havay
Russ Demarest
Doug Topliffe

Ministers to the World
Senior Pastor
Acting Associate Pastor
Director of Music
Organist/Accompanist
Deacon in Charge
Videographer

LEADING OUR CHURCH SCHOOL TODAY

Larissa Riley
Sue Werst
Dave Hagerstrom
Gretchen Davis

Church School Coordinator
Teacher, Preschool to Elementary
Teacher, Grades 5 to 7
Nursery Attendant

A CLASSIC ORNAMENT RETURNS! This ornament, featuring the Brick School, our Church steeple, and the Amherst Town Library, is bound to become one of your Christmas treasures. First offered 15 years ago by the Christmas in Amherst Village team, this classic is available this season for \$20. Ornaments can be purchased in the community room after worship in December, or by stopping by the church office during office hours (Mon., Wed., Fri. 10-1). All proceeds benefit our church!

SHARE FOOD PANTRY requests for December include pancake mix and syrup, condiments, cooking sauces and seasonings, cooking oils, jelly, and cold cereal. 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!

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

THE FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR are given by Susan Holden, in loving memory of her brother, Lawrence Charles Dudley.

Financial Summary (as of October 31, 2023)

	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$178,298	\$184,943	\$ (6,645)
Expenses	\$162,991	\$173,298	\$(10,307)
Net Income	\$ 15,307	\$ 11,645	\$ 3,663

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: Ken Bell, Don Lyon, Paul Spiess (Treasurer), Doug Topliffe, and Todd Whitney (Chair).

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: Kick off your holidays with fun, food, and festive company! **HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS** is a unique event at one of Amherst's historic houses, Journey Cake Farm (226 Route 101), decorated for the season. On Sunday, Dec. 17th, from 3:00-6:00 p.m. enjoy hot and cold hors d'oeuvres catered by *Celebrations* of Nashua, music by two local pianists, and a scavenger hunt within the sprawling 1841 home. There will be a cash bar and a 50/50 raffle. Reservations are \$75/pp and must be made at <https://www.ccamherst.org/holidays>.

Tickets are limited and selling quickly! Deadline for purchase is December 10.

The venue is graciously provided by Laura and Bill Ferry and **all proceeds benefit our church**. We expect this event to sell out quickly; reservations are limited to 60 guests, so sign up today!

Please note there is **NO PARKING** ONSITE. All attendees must take the complimentary shuttle to the venue from the Meeting House Plaza, 199 Route 101, Amherst.

WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR ANNUAL GIVING: December offers a unique opportunity to "tax advantage" your annual pledge to the church by transferring appreciated stock from your investment portfolio to fulfill your annual commitment. It is quite simple and the stock can be transferred in a day, but don't wait beyond mid-December due to year end activity! Contact [Andrea Cyr](#) in the church office for details.

A RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE will be held on Friday, December 29 from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. in our community room. All blood types are needed. To schedule an appointment, visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter sponsor code ACCNH.



Celebrate the Season of Giving

The Christmas season is just around the corner and the World Service team is again partnering with two organizations to help ensure that all in our community experience the joy of the holidays. As you can see below, there is a way for everyone to participate, and a wide variety of those to support.

We will again be signing up online, using SignUp Genius. There will still be a "Giving Tree" at the church, but this year, the stars will have instructions on how to use the signup tool.

Important Dates:

- Nov. 19 – Dec. 9: Dates to sign up for gifts – information will be sent out by email.
- Nov. 19, 26, Dec. 3: Members of World Service Team available to help, after in-person worship.
- Dec. 10: Deadline to drop off gifts to church.

Crestwood Nursing Home: We will continue our annual tradition of purchasing gifts for each resident from their specific wish lists. You will be able to view the wish lists and choose a resident that speaks to your heart. Crestwood gifts should be returned unwrapped in a gift bag, with the name of the resident clearly visible on the bag, and gift wrap included.

Family Promise of Southern NH (formerly Anne-Marie House): They have moved to a larger facility and are now housing approximately 40 children and their families. Each child has at least one special item on their Christmas list. Family Promise gifts should be wrapped and returned with a tag with the name/age of the child. Santa, Mrs. Claus, and members of the World Service team will deliver these gifts in person on December 18.

All gifts are due back to the church no later than end of worship Sunday, Dec 10.

For more information please visit our [2023 Christmas Gift Drives Website](#)

Advent





Advent Vespers Service

Wednesday, December 13 7:00 p.m.

In the busy weeks that lead up to Christmas we can sometimes lose sight of “the reason for the season” of Advent. Advent is meant to be a peaceful time of anticipation and preparation, a time of joy and hope. Advent is also a time for those who aren’t feeling joyous to find a space for their uncertainty, apprehension, and grief. Advent gives us permission

to honor the part of ourselves that is longing to slow down, to take a breath, to *be* instead of *do*. It also provides us an opportunity to find comfort in the darkness.

Join us for a time of quiet prayer, reflective readings, candle lighting, and meditative music. Come experience Advent and take a break from the busyness of Christmas. Come as you are and just be.

Our Church Calendar

December 3—9, 2023

Some events are taking place virtually.

Links are sent out directly by email, and a list of recurring meetings with their links can be found in the member section of our website.

Today	10:00 a.m.	Worship
	11:15 a.m.	Fellowship
	11:30 a.m.	Small Group Ministry
	2:00 p.m.	Middle High Youth Group
	4:30 p.m.	Senior High Youth Group
Monday	10:30 a.m.	WA Luncheon
Tuesday	10:00 a.m.	WA Board
	1:30 p.m.	Small Group Ministry
	4:30 p.m.	Church Council
Wednesday	10:00 a.m.	Wednesday AM Adult Ed
Thursday	6:00 p.m.	Bell Choir
	6:30 p.m.	Confirmation
	7:30 p.m.	Chancel Choir

Sunday, December 3, 2023

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

“Grace upon Grace.” John 1:16

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

You have the opportunity to be part of this ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

This appeal will run for the month of December. To donate, visit our online giving page (in the Missions text box please type Christmas Fund) or send a check to the church office (11 Church St. Amherst NH 03031) with The Christmas Fund in the memo line.





**CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AMHERST**
United Church of Christ

SUNDAY
December 10, 2023
4:00 pm
11 Church Street, Amherst NH
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

SARA PHELPS, MUSIC DIRECTOR
CHANCEL CHOIR
HANDBELL CHOIR
MICHAEL HAVAY, ORGAN/PIANO
SUE WERST, FLUTE/PICCOLO

Enjoy beautiful sacred choral and handbell selections, along with much-loved popular favorites of the season. Everyone gets to participate in the merry singalong songs!

Family Christmas Concert



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Gather at Journey Cake Farm

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH

3:00-6:00 PM

KICK-OFF YOUR HOLIDAYS

WITH FUN, FOOD, AND FESTIVE COMPANY!

Enjoy a unique event at one of Amherst's historic houses, decorated for the season.

- Savor hot and cold hors d'oeuvres catered by *Celebrations* of Nashua
- Enjoy music by two local pianists
- Join in a scavenger hunt within the sprawling 1841 home
- Cash bar and a 50/50 raffle

RESERVATIONS \$75/PP AT

[HTTPS://WWW.CCAMHERST.ORG/HOLIDAYS](https://www.ccamherst.org/holidays)



more info



JOURNEY CAKE FARM

226 STATE ROUTE 101, AMHERST, NH

All proceeds benefit

The Congregational Church of Amherst,
NH UCC

VENUE GRACIOUSLY PROVIDED BY LAURA AND BILL FERRY