

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

# VILLAGE SPIRE

November 2023



## Levi Sunday is November 5

Fall is upon us and trees are dropping their colorful leaves again. Time for another Levi Sunday, this year planned for Sunday, Nov. 5 right after worship.

We have a number of outdoor projects planned including leave raking and general lawn and grounds clean up. Our walkways out front need weeding again too.

Everyone is invited to come out and help in the grounds clean up. Please bring your favorite rake and tools to help accomplish the jobs you would like to help with.

Many hands make light work! Hope to see you there.



## “Welcoming to All”

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor  
November 2023

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

Our congregation's mission statement happens to be a haiku. That was a happy accident, as we didn't set out to make our mission statement a form of Japanese poetry. Haikus are often a distillation of a larger idea or concept, and I think ours is a wonderful reflection of the three-fold mission of our congregation. We do our best to intentionally ground all that we do in God's love: our worship, our Christian formation programs, and our outreach. With that grounding, we're inspired to serve our neighbors near and far: through our World Service Team, our Home Starter Program, our Woman's Association, and through all the organizations we partner with in service. And both our grounding and our serving wouldn't be possible if we didn't welcome people in a way that inspired them to want to be an active part of our community.

The first two lines of our mission statement are relatively easy to envision. There are programs, activities, budgets, and concrete results that we can point to and name as examples of how we're grounded in God's love and how we serve our neighbors near and far. However, the third line of our mission statement is not as easy to quantify. What does it mean to be welcoming to all? And what does it look like to live into it?

Every Sunday at the start of worship, we hear the welcome statement of the United Church of Christ: “No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.” I can't tell you how many times newcomers to our church have lifted up this statement as they talk about the welcome they experienced on their first Sunday worshipping with us. They've also named how this statement makes our church very different from those they've attended in the past. For those who come wondering if they'll truly be welcomed in a Christian church, because of what they believe, what they've experienced, or who they are, it is so comforting to immediately hear from the pulpit “No matter who you are, or where you are on your journey, you are welcome here.”

Our open communion table is also a refreshing change for some, as we welcome all of God's children at the table, regardless of age, belief, baptism or membership status. We've also moved to using communion bread that is gluten, dairy, and egg free to accommodate those with food allergies who would otherwise be unable to participate. The ways we've made our worship service more accessible also adds to our welcome. We offer a large print bulletin on yellow paper that is easier for the sight impaired to read; we removed one of our pews to allow those in wheelchairs to sit with the congregation; and our livestream allows those who physically can't be with us, for any reason, to worship with us on a regular basis.

*Continued on page 3*



Mark your calendars!  
**Breakfast  
with Santa**  
**December 2**

Two Sitzings: 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. and  
10:30 a.m. to noon

**BWS sales are available exclusively  
for church members from  
November 1–7.**

Registration opens to the public  
November 8.

Cost is \$12.00 for adults;  
\$10.00 for children under 14; children  
12-months & younger are free.

**Register early!** We always sell out  
way before the event.

For more details and to register,  
visit the [BWS web page](#).

## 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)

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.

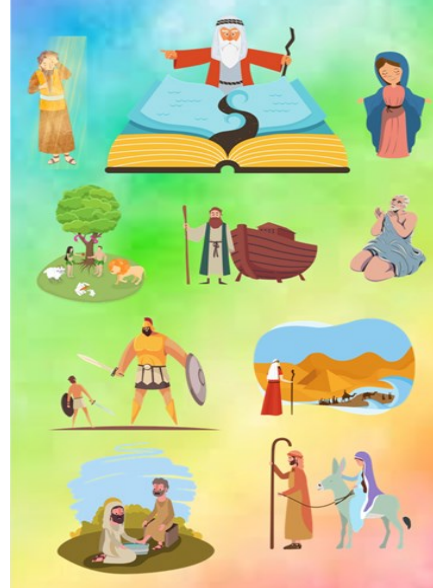
All groups will meet in-person or on Zoom as needed.

### 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](#) or contact [Pastor Maureen](#), 603-673-3231 x11

## 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



## **Welcoming to All,** continued from page 1

One additional and very easy way that we might improve our welcome is one that we may overlook or unintentionally tune out when we hear it requested: "Please wear your nametag." Nametags help newcomers put names to faces, and also help those of us who've been here a while, as we learn the names of our newcomers. Nametags also help us learn the name of the person we've seen in worship for five, ten, or even twenty years and still don't know who they are, and feel awkward admitting it. Nametags are a blessing to those who are memory-challenged, regardless of age. And even if we've been here so long that we think we know everyone, and everyone knows us, our congregation is just big enough that someone who sings in the choir may not know the names of the parents in our church school, and vice versa. Nametags help us get to know one another and to feel more connected.

Nametags also provide an opportunity for us to live into our church's commitment to being an Open and Affirming congregation within the United Church of Christ. In November 2010, after undergoing an intentional process to widen our welcome, we voted to become Open and Affirming, and we adopted a Welcome Statement that explicitly names those who traditionally have felt unwelcome in churches:

*"We celebrate God's love for people of all races and ethnicities, mental and physical abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, and all of the other diverse attributes woven into the fabric of humankind."*

While our welcome statement is printed in our bulletin and is on our website, including a symbol of it on our nametags is a more visible and immediate way of identifying our worship space as a "safe space" for those who have traditionally felt unsafe in our churches. We've made rainbow stickers available (using the traditional Christian fish symbol) to affix to our nametags, and we've just introduced "preferred pronoun" stickers for those who wish to use them. Speaking from my own experience, and the shared experience of those who've had similar encounters in churches, seeing a rainbow or pronoun sticker on a name badge is life changing. To walk in the doors of a church, after having worked up the courage after many years of being away, or after attending church after church that turned out to not be as welcoming as they believe themselves to be, to immediately see a symbol that says you are truly welcome is one of the God moments that we all long to have. The moment when you feel God's spirit working through others, reaching through the pain and heartache of past and present experiences. The moment when you know you've finally found a community that welcomes you as you are.

I know this explicit kind of welcome is challenging for some among us, and I welcome your questions and comments if you're struggling with this. We may not understand why it's needed, or why we're singling out some in our welcome over others. I could say the purpose of the nametag stickers is not to make the wearer feel comfortable, rather it's to help those who desperately need to see such a welcome feel more comfortable in our space. But I believe the stickers and the welcome they announce benefit all of us. They push us to open our arms and hearts wider. They push us to listen and learn from the experiences of others. They push us to be the fuller body of Christ, and to further explore what more we could be doing to be welcoming to all.

Peace and blessings,  
*Pastor Maureen*



## **Membership Information**

**New Members and  
Visitors Info Session**  
**Thursday, November 2**  
**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 Thursday, November 2 at 7:00 p.m. to learn more about all of the above!

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, or contact [Pastor Maureen](#).

## Hello

my name is





Deb Boczenowski

## Meet Deb Boczenowski

Deb Boczenowski has many passions: children, teaching, math, and creating crafts. She majored in math in college, but after graduation she was unable to find a teaching job, so she worked as a software engineer for 10 years. Deb then changed careers and operated a home day care for the next 10 years. Finally, combining her love of kids and math, she taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade math for 19 years.

Around the time Deb retired, she and her husband Steve moved from Groton, MA to Amherst to live with their daughter Stephanie, her husband Matt, and their three young children. Deb, a lifelong UCC member, and Steve, a former Catholic, began attending our church shortly before the pandemic hit. They found our congregation friendly, welcoming, and our church a "warm, good place."

Since joining CCA, Deb has become very involved in the life of the church. She regularly brings her four grandkids, Jeffrey, Jordan, Jada and Jasper, now ages 7, 6, 5 and 4, to Church School. Deb says that "kids are the present and future of the church," so she volunteers at Church School, Vacation Bible School, and in the nursery. She has just recently joined the Congregational Care team, where she hopes to contribute to that ministry. And this fall Deb also joined the Bell Choir.

Deb became a member of the Woman's Association after attending just one meeting. Her talent for creating handmade crafts made her a natural fit for the WA. She had always enjoyed sewing, so a couple years ago she tried out machine embroidery, which she found a lot of fun. She embroiders various items, including greeting cards, journal covers, Christmas ornaments, and baby items. Many of her embroidered items and other lovely creations will be for sale at the upcoming WA Holiday Fair. Deb urges church members to attend the Fair to shop for great gifts, even if they don't need anything for themselves. She has also recently become involved in the WA leadership as a member of the Sunshine Committee, which reaches out to WA members by sending greeting cards, visiting, or arranging meals for those in need.

In addition to all her activities at our church, Deb has other volunteer interests. This past summer at Stepping Stones, she organized donations and helped one of the teens study math for his GED. She also volunteers as a lunch monitor at Clark School one day a week, and helps out with the Healthy Kids running program on Sunday afternoons.

Although Deb joined the Nipmugs, the local chapter of the Questors, a group dedicated to historical preservation, only a year ago, she is now in charge of programming. She recently organized a field trip to the Shaker Village in Canterbury and has planned an upcoming trip to the Sarah Orne Jewett house in Maine.

Our church is so fortunate that Deb found a new church home here and that she generously shares her time and talents, volunteering in both our church and the community.

*Written by Adrienne Topliffe*

## Racial Justice Group

The Racial Justice Group of our church would like to invite all people to a book discussion. Our first discussion will be the introduction and first chapter of *"The Black Friend"* by Frederick Joseph.

We will meet on Sunday, November 12 in the parlor, after church at 11:30 a.m. Our discussion will be from 11:30-12:00 followed by our regular meeting which ends at 1:00.

Please consider coming to the book discussion and possibly joining in our meeting that follows. All are welcome to the book discussion and the meeting.

*Blessings to all,  
your Racial Justice Group.*



## Understanding the New Testament Wednesday Morning Adult Ed

November 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<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 this Great Courses video lecture series. In **November**, we begin exploring **the letters NOT written by Paul**.

No Bible knowledge is necessary, and newcomers are welcome! In each session, we watch a video together as a group and then have a discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. The class meets every first and third Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. from September through May. We meet on Zoom because we've found this to be a more inclusive way to be together. Please RSVP to [Pastor Maureen](#) to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the Members Section under "Wednesday Adult Ed.0"

### Understanding the New Testament - Upcoming Sessions

- November 1: The Community of John after the Gospel
- November 15: Galatians: Salvation for Gentiles
- December 6: The Abraham Letters: Hebrews and James
- December 20: Churches in Crisis in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and Jude
- January 17: New Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles
- February 7: Revelation: Envisioning God's Reality
- February 21: The Quest for Unity in the New Testament



## Family Christmas Concert and Singalong



**Sunday, December 10  
4:00 p.m.**

The Congregational  
Church  
11 Church Street,  
Amherst NH

Free and open to the public

Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir

Sara Phelps, *Director of Music*

Michael Havay, *Organist and Pianist*

## The Stories of Our Faith



### Creative Worship

Sunday, November 19 at 10:00 a.m.

### Abraham and Sarah

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

In **November**, we'll hear the story of **Abraham and Sarah**. They were the first to make a covenant with God: they would walk with God, and God would always walk with them. That's a big promise to make, on both sides. What does such a promise look like for us?

On Creative Worship Sundays, we step outside the box of our traditional service with interactive liturgies, music, and activities. The children participate in the beginning of the service before heading off to Church School.

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

## WA Holiday Fair on November 18!

The always-popular Holiday Fair, sponsored by the Woman's Association, will be held on November 18, the Saturday before Thanksgiving, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and will feature traditional favorites and new features, filling the Community Room and the Vestry with holiday cheer.

Plan to see a wide variety of special craft items; decorated wreaths, greens arrangements and other holiday decorations; birch bark ornaments, holiday baked goods, pecans and cheese; jewelry, handbags, collectibles, glassware, fine china, and gifts for all ages; a raffle of holiday baskets and a silent auction.

If you would like to help with Fair preparations or the day of the Fair, contact Adrienne Topliffe at [wa@ccamherst.org](mailto:wa@ccamherst.org).

## What's Growing in the Greenhouse?

*Welcome to the new hub for youth ministry in our church!*



## What's happening in November?

### Youth Groups

#### Senior High Youth Group

Grades 9–12, Meets Sunday evenings from 4:30–6:30 p.m.

- November 5 Youth Group
- November 12 Youth Group

#### Senior High Lock In November 18-19

We are having a lock-in open to all students 9th–12th grade!

Join us for an all night party with games, food, and an escape room inside the church.

Saturday, Nov. 18 at 7:00 p.m. through Sunday, Nov. 19 10:00a.m., with students welcome, but not required, to join us for church afterwards.

Register here at <https://forms.gle/DGDACS5s5u6P7>

#### Middle High Youth Group (Grades 5–8)

- November 5 Nature Walk from 2:00–4:00 p.m.

#### Confirmation Classes

(Students 8th grade and up)  
Meets Thursday nights 6:30–8:30 p.m.

- November 9
- November 16 (meeting with mentors)

## CCA Book Drive October 29-November 12



The World Service Committee and Church School are sponsoring a children's book drive to bring books to young readers throughout New Hampshire and Vermont. The official kickoff of the drive will be on Mission Sunday, October 29. On that day, Laura Rice, Executive Director of the [Children's Literacy Foundation \(CLiF\)](#) will join our service as a guest speaker. CLiF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire a love of reading and writing among children up to age 12 throughout New Hampshire and Vermont. Since 1998, CLiF has served over 350,000 children at higher risk of growing up with low literacy skills in communities across every region of the two states. Its programs include book giveaways, storytelling programs, author visits, and summer reading programs.

World Service and Church School chose to partner with CLiF for two reasons: to promote literacy and to support communities in New Hampshire and Vermont that were profoundly affected by flooding this past year.

We are seeking donations of **new** books from a Wish List put together by the Church School classes. CLiF accepts only **brand new books** with no signs of wear. It is important that the children they serve, many of whom have few, if any, books of their own, feel they are getting something new, special and personal.

Please note that most of the books on the gift registry are hardcover books. We ask that you purchase the hardcover when possible. CLiF prefers donations of hardcover books because hardcover books are more durable and tend to be prized by the children who receive them. There are several ways to participate in the book drive:

- Visit our [Amazon gift registry](#) to purchase books. Choose to have them shipped to "Andrea Cyr's Gift Registry Address."
- Visit the Book Drive display in the Community Room after church on October 29 and November 5. The Church School Classes have prepared tags that you can take home to remind you to purchase books from the gift registry or purchase them on your own. If you purchase books on your own, please bring them to the Church office. We ask that you purchase titles that are on the gift registry or from the same series so that they meet CLiF's criteria for serving their young readers.
- Make a donation to the World Service Committee designated for the Book Drive, and we will purchase the books for you. You may do this after the service on October 29 and November 5, or by making a donation on the church website [Donation Page](#) (use the 'Other' line and type Book Drive in the text box)

Our Church School classes have been discussing how providing books to children is one of the ways we can live our mission of "Serving Neighbors Near and Far". This expression of giving is very personal to them, as they selected the books they felt would be special and meaningful to other children. Once the books have been collected, the Church School students will sort and pack them for delivery to CLiF.

If you have any questions, please reach out to [Kate Thompson](#)

# November 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1) 10:00 Wednesday Morning Adult Ed	2) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:00 New Member Info Session 7:30 Chancel Choir	3)	4)
5) <b>LEVI SUNDAY</b> 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Small Group Ministry 2:00 Middle High Youth Group 4:30 Senior High Youth Group	6) 10:00 WA Workshop	7) 10:00 WA Board Meeting 1:30 Small Group Ministry 4:30 Church Council	8) 9:30 Staff Meeting	9) 9:30 Congregational Care 4:00 Communications Team 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:30 Chancel Choir	10)	11)
12) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:15 Racial Justice Group 4:30 Senior High Youth Group	13) 10:00 WA Workshop	14) 7:00 Diaconate 7:00 Trustees of the Facility	15) 10:00 Wednesday Morning Adult Ed 6:00 Budget & Finance Team	16) 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:30 Chancel Choir	17)	18) <b>WA Holiday Fair</b> 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
19) <b>CREATIVE WORSHIP</b> 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Christian Ed	20) 10:00 WA Workshop	21)	22) 9:30 Staff Meeting	23) 	24)	25)
26) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir	27) 7:00 World Service Team	28)	29)	30) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir		



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

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Congregational Church of Amherst  
11 Church Street  
**Holiday Fair**  
Saturday November 18th

9am to 2pm  
**Jewelry Bakery  
Raffle Baskets**

  
**Treasures**

  
**Birch Houses**

  
**Wreaths**

  
**Cabot Cheese Pecans**

  
**Silent Auction**

  
**Crafts Knits**