

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

VILLAGE SPIRE

January 2024



Happy New Year!



The Stories of Our Faith



Creative Worship

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

"Moses and the Mountain"

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 January, we'll hear the story of *Moses and the Mountain*. Moses was called by God to lead his people out of captivity and into the Promised Land. But Moses would not live to see the promise fulfilled. In this month where we celebrate the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., we'll explore what it means to answer God's call, knowing that the work we do may not bear fruit in our lifetime. We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!

"Hope for the New Year"

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
January 2024

At the 1964 World's Fair in New York City, visitors toured exhibits that showcased future technologies and offered bold predictions of what life would be like 60 years onward in the year 2024. The "Dream House of Tomorrow" touted the wonders of plastics, laminates, and Formica, with easy to clean surfaces that would never need replacing. At the IBM pavilion, visitors pushed punch cards into a computer and received printouts containing news stories, answers to scientific questions, and recipes. At the Bell System pavilion, engineers unveiled a 'picturephone' that allowed callers to see who they were talking to. And the Futurama ride sponsored by General Motors presented a possible vision of the world of 2024: colonies on the moon, underwater cities, moving sidewalks, and computer-guided cars zipping along congestion-free highways. We often have such high hopes for the future. Ten years after the NYC World's Fair, I remember taking a car trip with my grandmother where she predicted that by the time I was an adult, cars would no longer be necessary; instead we would be zipping from place to place in our jet packs. Five decades later, I'm still waiting for that jet pack.

It's a New Year's tradition to look back at where we've been, while also looking ahead at where we hope to be. While we may lean towards a more pessimistic look backwards, as we note the illnesses, injuries, and injustices both we and our world endured over the last year, we may take a more optimistic look forward. As we tell ourselves this is the year we'll finally lose the extra 20 pounds we've been carrying around, or we'll finally get the knee replacement we've been putting off, or we'll start that craft project, novel, or bathroom remodel that we've been saying we were going to do and never got around to doing. Hope springs eternal on January 1st. You may have made your own bold commitment for the coming year: to spend more time volunteering, to plant a vegetable garden, to actually read all the books piled by your nightstand. Or even bolder, we may use the turn of the calendar year as the motivating force to make a committed change in our life: to get help for an addiction, to heal a broken relationship, to go deeper in our faith.

January is typically when we allow ourselves to have such hope for the future, as we look forlornly at the past, counting up all the ways that the last year was just as bad as the year before it, if not worse. If you watch the news, surf the internet, or spend any length of time on social media, it's hard not to judge the recent past in this way. We don't really need a year-end review to remind ourselves of the angst, anger, and apathy that many of us felt, or felt in others, as we were collectively hit with a daily dose of division, disasters, and injustice in our world. In a way, our resolution to plant a garden, read more books, or give back to our community may be our subversive attempt to counteract the negativity we consume over the course of a year. It's our way of holding onto hope, when despair seems to be gaining ground.

Continued on page 3

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
Facebook.com/ccamherst
Instagram.com/ccamherstnh

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

Send in all newsletter articles
by the fifteenth of the month.

Items for the Sunday bulletin
are due Thursday morning.

OUR CHURCH STAFF:

Rev. Maureen R. Frescott
Senior Pastor
pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

Kevin G. S. Marsh
Acting Associate Pastor
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Andrea Cyr
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Sara L. Phelps
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kalben1@comcast.net

Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Larissa Riley
Church School Coordinator
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Holiday Fair Thanks

The Woman's Association would like to thank all church members and friends who helped to make our 2023 Holiday Fair such a success. The fair netted just over \$14,000! We are grateful to all those who supported the fair by donating baked goods, helping with set up or clean up, working at the fair, or shopping on fair day. We couldn't have done it without you. The proceeds from the fair enable the Woman's Association to make a sizable annual pledge, plus other donations to our church, and to support numerous community organizations throughout the year.

A special thanks goes to the following "Friends of the WA" who generously donated their time to work on the fair. Their help was invaluable in making the fair so successful. We apologize to anyone who was inadvertently omitted.

Mark Baddeley
Theresa Currie
Susan Deschenes
Roger Hooper
Art Leknes
Don Lyon
Heather MacDonald
Dave Phelps
Anita Swanson
Holly Tonnesen
Neal Topliffe

Fran Baddeley
Colleen Cushing
Leona Hendrickson
Sally Hooper
Vicki Leknes
Liz MacMillan
Bruce Manchester
Dick Stout
John Swanson
Doug Topliffe
Tom Werst



A Few Words About the Weather...

Church Closings Due to Bad Weather:

As many know, New England weather is ever changing and at times can be quite unpredictable. In the case of bad weather and the need to cancel an in-person worship service, we will post announcements on WMUR Channel 9 television, and on our website and Facebook pages.

Of course, that doesn't mean you will miss out on Sunday morning worship. Our live streamed service will still be available for folks to tune in to at 10:00 a.m. on our Facebook page, and we will continue to upload the recorded service to our website by noon.

Beware of Falling Snow and Ice: During the winter months, we want to remind everyone that snow and ice may fall from our roof at any time. Please use caution when in our driveway, and do not walk too close to the building.

Hope for the New Year, continued from page 1

This is where our Christian faith comes into play. The hope that we feel when we peer into the manger on Christmas Eve is not just “the reason for the season” - it’s meant to sustain us year round. Our ability to see a tiny spark of God’s light shining in the darkness is heightened by the Christmas story. But the story is designed to remind us to look for that spark even after the Christmas lights have been taken down and the decorations have all been put away. Yet, in the long, cold days of January and February, when we don’t have the parties, food, and gift giving feeding our sense of joy and anticipation, it can be hard to hold onto the hope of Christmas. Especially when our focus once again shifts to all the not-so-hopeful events of our world and our own lives.

Thankfully, if we find our sense of hope waning by March, we have the promise of Easter to rejuvenate it. The stories of Jesus’ birth and rebirth through the resurrection remind us that God is always inbreaking into our world. “Inbreaking” is a word we often use in Advent as we anticipate the movement of God in our world in Jesus, but that movement didn’t begin and end with Jesus’ physical presence in our world. God’s inbreaking never truly stops. It’s all around us. In nature, in our neighbors, in the millions (yes, millions) of different ways that we human beings reach out to one another; in expressions of compassion, in acts of caring, in our work for justice for the least among us. In the dark days of January, look for the light that breaks into our world in all of these ordinary ways. This is the hope of Christmas, carried forward.

Every new year we’re reminded that the future we long for is destined to be filled with what we bring to it. While Formica, jetpacks, new technologies, and scientific advancements may make our lives easier, none of it will make us any happier. But the time we devote to becoming more loving, more compassionate, more grace-filled people will give us a future, and a present, worth waiting for.

Here’s to a hope-filled 2024.

May we make it the year we wish it to be.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



**Wednesday Morning
Adult Ed**

Understanding the New Testament

January 17

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? We’re continuing our year-long look at the New Testament with this Great Courses video lecture series. 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.”

Financial Summary

(as of November 30, 2023)



	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$218,660	\$214,413	\$ 4,247
Expenses	\$196,094	\$207,713	\$(11,619)
Net Income	\$ 22,567	\$ 6,700	\$ 15,867

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).

Understanding the New Testament - Upcoming Sessions

January 17	Churches in Crisis in 1 st and 2 nd Peter and Jude
February 7	New Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles
February 21	Revelation: Envisioning God’s Reality
March 6	The Quest for Unity in the New Testament



Judi Whaland Dunbar, Active in Our Church for Six Decades

Judi Whaland and her family moved to Mack Hill Road during a blizzard in the winter of 1958. After the roads had been plowed, their neighbor, Betty Jackson, welcomed them to Amherst with a big bouquet of flowers and told them that "Church starts at 11:00." The Whalands, who were Congregationalists, started attending the Congregational Church of Amherst the next Sunday. Except for what she calls a few short "sabbaticals" over the years, Judi has been active in our church ever since.

Judi considers the church her home. Her mother Ruth's passion was renovating fixer-uppers, so although the family remained in Amherst, they moved often, living in a total of seven different houses. For Judi, the church was a constant in her life. Her family always sat on the east side of the sanctuary near the back, where Judi still sits today. She recalls that for many years, the Opening Hymn was "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." She attended the Pilgrim Fellowship, a group of Amherst teens that met on Sunday evenings at the church.

When her daughter Wendy was a child, Judi was involved in the Christian Ed program, including serving as Sunday School Superintendent. She also taught Sunday School, which for Grades 1-6, met in the former Post Office building across the common, while the younger kids met in the vestry. (What is now the nursery was the church kitchen). The last Sunday of the month was designated as Family Sunday. There was no Sunday School that day so that the teachers and children could attend the church service, which was a kid-centered service at which only the Junior Choir sang. The church eventually sold the post office building and the proceeds helped pay for the building of the connector and education wing in the late 70's.

One event the Christian Ed Committee sponsored was a Family Advent Workshop. Judi recalls one memorable workshop, led by her and Elizabeth Ikerd, that didn't go as planned. During the evening workshop, while the kids were creating Christmas crafts, the power went out in the village, including the church. Instead of calling it quits, they lit candles to work by. All went well until the Amherst Fire Department showed up, since the smoke detectors in the building had gone off due to the candles. Fortunately, there was no fire. The kids enjoyed the near disaster though, telling Judi, "Mrs. Dunbar, this was great! Let's do it again next year."

In addition to her Christian Ed work, over the years Judi has served on numerous committees, including Trustees and the Music Committee (3 terms), as well as Church Moderator and Parliamentarian. She even spent one year as Junior Choir Director. She is currently Pastor Maureen's Advocate on the Pastoral Relations Team.

One of Judi's most enjoyable church roles was as Wedding Coordinator with Wendy. Judi says that they could write a book about that experience. She recalls several memorable anecdotes, including a couple who wanted nothing black, including the Bibles, in the sanctuary during their wedding, the flower girl who got locked in the bathroom, and the dripping window wreaths that had been over watered. She remembers some interesting requests, such as the couple who wanted a *Wizard of Oz* themed wedding and another that wanted no mention of God in the service. (Those couples found other venues for their nuptials). What had started out as a temporary position turned into an almost fulltime job in the summer of 2000, when there were 23 weddings at the church, including three in one weekend! That was also the summer when the church was undergoing construction of the new connector, so Judi had to make sure that no construction materials were in the sight of the wedding goers.

Since retiring twelve years ago from a career in insurance, being involved in the church is now more important to Judi than ever since it gives her life focus and a sense of community. She is also a longtime member of the Milford Rotary Club, which, similar to the church's mission of service, enables Judi to do more to help others than she could do on her own.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Judi has also become active in the Woman's Association since her retirement. She currently serves as WA Assistant Treasurer and is on the Memorial Reception Committee. Having been involved in online auctions in the past for the Nashua Soup Kitchen, Judi was instrumental in the success of the WA's online auctions held during the pandemic.

The church event Judi missed most during the pandemic was the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. A longstanding tradition of her family has been to sit in the front row pew of the balcony at that service, along with Sally Brown Bowkett's family. The view of the whole church in candlelight makes this service the most meaningful of all for Judi.

As the longest serving member of the CCA, Judi has many memories of the church over the past six decades. We're grateful that she stills calls our church "home" after 66 years.

Written by Adrienne Topliffe

Serving Neighbors

Our church mission statement contains the phrase "Serving neighbors near and far." Fulfilling that mission has evolved to become an integral part of diverse groups within the church: Music, Christian Education, Woman's Association, Diaconate, World Service, the Racial Justice group and the Homestarter Program all direct our time, talent and treasure toward the needs of our community and our world. Following is a summary of those efforts for the first six months (June – November) of our current church year. Where relevant, website information is noted for those who would like to know more about the organizations to which we have made donations.

The **Homestarter Program** has helped more than 35 newly housed individuals and families, and accepted more than 40 donations of furniture. Heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers from our church and the wider community who contribute time and labor to this program. Special recognition is due to Susan Holden and Terri Behm for the vision and persistence to make this wonderful program a reality. (<https://www.ccamherst.org/homestarter/>)

On July 1, on the steps of the church, the **Racial Justice Group** organized a reading of Frederick Douglass's famous speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

The **Woman's Association** put on a hugely successful Holiday Fair and made donations of:

- \$320.87 to the Confirmation class to buy undergarments for residents of Tirrell House, a shelter run under the auspices of Families in Transition (<https://www.fitnh.org/>)
- \$250.00 to the Holiday Toy Store (<https://www.sharenh.org/>)
- \$300.00 to SHARE Outreach (<https://www.sharenh.org/>)
- \$300.00 to CLiF Book Drive (<https://clifonline.org/>)
- Hygiene products collection for Stepping Stones clients (<https://www.steppingstonesnh.org/>)

The focus of this year's Mission Sunday at the end of October was the **Children's Literacy Foundation**. In addition to the donation from the WA, our church school and congregation donated more than 235 new books, which are making their way into the hands of children in New Hampshire and Vermont. Website for CLiF is <https://clifonline.org>

After a COVID-enforced hiatus, volunteers led by John Swanson put on a **community supper** at our church in October.

The **Church School** prepared and shared a post-Thanksgiving soup luncheon with residents of the Mill Apartments in Milford.

The **World Service team** recommended and Church Council approved a number of donations from the Mission Fund:

- \$500 each for Montpelier Strong Recovery Fund and NOFA – Vermont Farms Flood Recovery.
- \$1,000 to the UCC relief effort after wildfires in Hawaii.
- \$4,000 to SHARE, paid in quarterly installments.
- \$1,000 to Stepping Stones, paid in quarterly installments.

As you can see, our outreach attempts to address many persistent needs in the world, and we are able to do far more as a faith community than we could as individuals. This summary will be updated several times a year – if you have projects, events or donations you believe deserve inclusion, please contact [Mark Baddeley](#) in person or via email.

Written by Mark Baddeley

SHARE Food Pantry

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

January 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!

Are You Missing a Dish?



Over the last year or so, our kitchen has accumulated a large number of dishes and assorted kitchen and serveware. Please take a moment to check the counter corner in the kitchen (you'll see the pile) to see if something belongs to you.

We have our annual Good Stuff sale coming up in the spring. Anything not claimed by then may find its way to the sale.



The Sunday **Joys and Concerns** are emailed to those who want to include them in their daily personal prayers. If you would like to receive them each week, please let [Andrea](#) in the church office know.

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1) 	2) 1:30 Small Group Ministry 4:30 Church Council	3)	4) 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:30 Chancel Choir	5)	6)
7) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Small Group Ministry 2:00 Middle High Youth 4:30 Senior High Youth	8) 10:30 WA Fair Critique & Stone Soup Luncheon	9) 10:00 WA Board 7:00 Diaconate 7:00 Trustees of the Facility	10) 9:30 Staff Meeting	11) 9:30 Congregational Care 4:00 Communications Team 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	12)	13) 12:00 Memorial Service for Fay Deysher
14) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Racial Justice Group 4:30 Senior High Youth	15) 10:00 WA Workshop	16)	17) 10:00 Weds. Morning Adult Ed 6:00 Budget & Finance Team	18) 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:30 Chancel Choir	19)	20)
21) Creative Worship 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Christian Ed 4:30 Senior High Youth	22) 10:00 WA Workshop	23)	24) 9:30 Staff Meeting	25) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	26)	27)
28) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir	29) 10:00 WA Workshop 7:00 World Service Team	30)	31)			

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

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*When they
saw the star,
they rejoiced
exceedingly
with great joy.*

Matthew 2:10, ESV

