

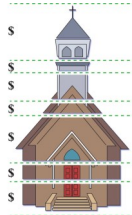
VILLAGE SPIRE

February 2024



Congregational Meeting: Preliminary Budget Meeting

Sunday, February 18
after worship
Community Room
and on Zoom



The Budget and Finance Team will provide an update on the current financial status of the church, as well as a preliminary budget overview for the next fiscal year (FY25).

This meeting will be held in the community room after worship, and a Zoom link will be available for those unable to join us in person. All members are encouraged to attend; childcare will be available. The Zoom link and password for online participation will be emailed to members.

This meeting is for informational purposes only; we will not be voting on anything.

Hard and Holy Work

Rev. Maureen R. Prescott, Senior Pastor
February 2024

What is the "work" of the church? Some would say it's summed up nicely in our congregation's mission statement. Our work is to *serve our neighbors near and far* and to be *welcoming to all*, as we *ground ourselves in God's love*. The season of Lent provides us with an opportunity to check in with how we're doing with this "work" – a progress report of sorts – that affirms the ways we've lived into our mission, while also highlighting where there's room for growth.

Lent is often presented as a solo journey, where we look into our own hearts and reflect on the ways in which we've fallen short in our commitment to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. For some, Lent is also about personal sacrifice. It involves giving something up, typically something that brings us pleasure, to create space for us to connect with the experience of those who have few pleasures in life, or to connect with the journey of Jesus and the suffering he endured on our behalf. I don't mean to be flippant, but I do wonder if giving up chocolate or caffeine, or whatever our guilty pleasure may be, can ever truly connect us with the suffering of others. If giving something up for Lent has never seemed like a worthwhile spiritual practice to you, or if turning inward to take a spiritual inventory of your shortcomings brings up too much "stuff" related to past religious or life experiences, you may be interested in an alternative Lenten journey that we're offering this year.

Continued on page 3

Valentine Luncheon

The Woman's Association Valentine Luncheon will take place on Monday, **February 12**. WA members **and** non-members are invited to join in this event.

The event will kick off at 10:30 a.m. with time to socialize. Lunch will begin about 11:30, and potluck items will be provided by attendees.

If you would like to attend and have not registered, please contact [Carol St. Jean](#) by email or 919-605-7067.



CCA's Annual Family Game Night and Potluck Supper

Saturday, February 17 from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

All ages, friends and family are welcome.

We will have Bingo, cards, board games and trivia, and attendees are encouraged to bring their own favorite game to share with others.

Prizes will be awarded too!

Pizza and beverages will be provided,
and it is potluck style for salads/sides/desserts.

A-M please bring salad/side

N-Z please bring dessert

A voluntary donation is welcome: \$5 for individuals/\$10 for families.

RSVP to [Meredith Dart](#).



VILLAGE SPIRE

A Parish Newsletter

The Congregational Church of
Amherst, NH, United Church of Christ
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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

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](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.

OUR CHURCH STAFF:

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

Kevin G. S. Marsh
Acting Associate Pastor
pastorkevin@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@ccamherst.org

Sara L. Phelps
Director of Music
kalben1@comcast.net

Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Larissa Riley
Church School Coordinator
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Prepared to Serve

Saturday, February 24
Pembroke Academy



Prepared to Serve is the annual workshop day put on by the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ. This event will boost your skills, connect you with others who share your vision, and equip you with tools to bring back to the Congregational Church of Amherst.

After a (short) worship service, attendees have choices in four consecutive workshop blocks. Each block offers 19-22 workshops (for a grand total of 80 options!).

This year, for the first time, attendees can, if they want, choose from four different "Pathways": Youth Pathway, Lay Preaching Pathway, ONA (Open and Affirming) Pathway, and the Anti-Racism Pathway. Attendees can also "mix-'n-match" across the different Pathways.

There is even an option for virtual attendees, who can participate via four Hybrid Panel Discussions.

Two members from CCA will be presenters this year: Bruce Kinney (Fostering Vital Anti-Racism Work Through Relationships) and Tom Werst (Taming your Church's Energy Bills while making All Things ReNEWable)!

This event takes place at Pembroke Academy on Saturday, February 24, 2024 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Early registration is strongly encouraged; before February 12th the per person cost is \$50 and includes lunch (vegetarian choices are available). Virtual attendee and Youth attendee cost is \$25. There is a family price cap of \$100 for more than 2 attendees from one family. Prices rise about \$15 per person after February 12th. Day-of registration is possible, but workshops tend to fill up prior to the actual date.

Here is the link for registration and for the workshop options: <https://nhcucc.regfox.com/prepared-to-serve-2024>



New Hampshire Conference
United Church of Christ

A Just World For All

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.

Hard and Holy Work, continued from page 1

On Wednesday evenings on Zoom, from February 21 through March 27, we'll gather to discuss what it means to do "Hard and Holy Work" using a guide written by a pastor and a seminary professor serving in Louisville, KY – the Rev. Mary Alice Birdwhistell and the Rev. Tyler D. Mayfield. The book is presented as a Bible study of the book of Exodus: the story of Moses and the Hebrew people who were led into the wilderness by God in search of the Promised Land. Now, if the term "Bible Study" has you thinking you need to come in with some knowledge of scripture or interest in delving deeper into ancient texts that are often difficult to understand in our modern context, have no fear. The scriptural anchoring of each chapter in this wonderful book is simply there as a guide. It's meant to immerse us in the story of those who knew what it was like to wander in the wilderness, questioning whether God was still present or never was. We've all had those moments. Each chapter of the book offers opportunities to engage the material in a way that feels comfortable to us: through reflection, through discussion, through action.

The action part is what makes this book unique. The Lenten journey can lead some of us to feel as if we're focusing too much on our own self-improvement or spiritual growth, to the detriment of the things outside of our own experience that desperately call for our attention as people of faith. It is true that a change in our own hearts is needed if we're dedicated to changing the world. But it's refreshing to have a Lenten guide that nudges us beyond our internal work and suggests how we might grow even more by becoming more aware of the journey of those not like us.

In the coming months as a congregation, we'll be talking more about "Widening Our Welcome" – how we might continue to live into our status as an Open and Affirming congregation, not just in terms of welcoming those in the LGBTQ+ community and beyond, but for all the folks we name in our very broad welcoming statement: those with differing mental and physical abilities, different socioeconomic backgrounds, all ethnic and racial backgrounds, and all gender identities and gender expressions. One category of folks not named here are those who found their way to us because of our wide welcome: those who've been in search of a faith community that offers this explicit welcome, and those who've either left faith communities, or have felt rejected by faith communities who offered a more narrow welcome. The "Hard and Holy Work" that we're inviting our congregation into during this Lenten season dovetails nicely with our desire to continue to live into our Christian calling by widening our welcome even further.

If this work feels too hard for you at the moment, because you're already carrying so much, and you'd rather embark on a gentler journey, this book has space for that as well. The authors encourage readers to skip over the readings or exercises that feel like a push too far. There's plenty here to engage us in each session. If you're still unsure, and you'd like to see a sample chapter of the book, send me an email and I'll send you the opening chapter on "Ash Wednesday" that the authors have made available for free. And if you are feeling ready for some hard and holy work, that is also joyful and hopeful work, we'd love to have you join us on this Lenten journey.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Maureen



Ash Wednesday Service

February 14 at 7:00 p.m.

Join us in the sanctuary as we begin the season of Lent with our traditional Ash Wednesday service. We will come together for a time of contemplative prayer, readings, special music, communion, and the distribution of ashes.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit." ~ Psalm 51

Racial Justice Team

The Racial Justice Team wants to invite you to join us for a book discussion on *The Black Friend* by Frederick Joseph, Sunday, February 11th directly after worship. We will be reading and discussing chapter 3, but don't feel like you need to get caught up to participate! Whether you've read the whole book, just chapter 3, or you just barely looked over it, we look forward to what you could bring to our discussion!

If you are unable to join us for our book discussion, but are interested in learning more about the issues of racial justice, please take advantage of our racial justice lending library in the narthex, and check up on our webpage for information!



An Overview of Our Church Ministry Teams

In 2016 an effort began to improve how our church organization was structured. At the April 2018 Annual Meeting a new organization was approved and became part of the church's By-laws. This change organized the church's numerous committees into four separate Ministries:

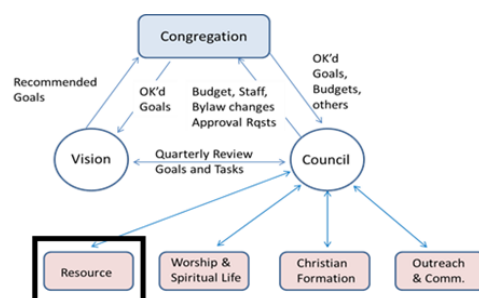
- Resource
- Christian Formation
- Worship & Spiritual Life
- Outreach & Communications

Each Ministry is led by a Ministry Coordinator who supervises the work done within their Ministry. These four Coordinators are voting members of the Church Council, which meets monthly, except in July. At Council meetings each Coordinator reports on activities within their Team that are of interest to the church leadership and the congregation.

Over the next several months there will be articles in the *Spire* explaining in detail the responsibilities and work of each Ministry. This month the Resource Ministry, the largest of the four, is profiled.

Resource Ministry

The Resource Ministry, led by Doug Topliffe, is responsible for the church's personnel and finances, as well as its buildings and grounds. It strives to ensure that all incomes are used to the best advantage to serve the church's mission and to assure the availability of our 253 year old house of worship for current members and future generations. To accomplish all these tasks in an efficient manner, as well as to match the many volunteers' interests and skills with Resource Ministry needs, the Resource Ministry is organized into a dedicated group of teams. Each team is responsible for a specific aspect of the overall Ministry, as detailed in the chart below. **



Resource Ministry Team	Roles and Responsibilities
Trustees of the Facilities, ToF	Maintain all facilities and property owned by the church. Oversee all contracts, purchase orders and leases
Memorial Garden	Maintenance of the Memorial Garden and support internments as needed
Budget and Finance	Develop the annual budget / oversee budget implementation
Trustees of the Investments Funds and Gifts, TIF	Manage invested endowment funds of the church. Manage and distribute gifted funds
Stewardship	Raise annual pledged funds for the church's operating budget
Team Member Recruiting	Recruit volunteers for ALL church ministries
Personnel	Provides personnel support to the Senior Pastor (human resources support role) for
Pastoral Relations Team, PRT	Support team for our two pastors and one of many communication mediums between the pastors and the congregation
Fundraising	Organize and staff w/ Special Opportunities to Serve (SOS) volunteers fundraising activities and projects for the church
Video Services	Operates live streaming and recording of Sunday and special worship services for remote attendees

Although most of the Resource Ministry Teams are active all year long, this time of year is especially important for the Stewardship Team, which prepares and undertakes the Stewardship Campaign, and the Budget Team, which first drafts a Preliminary budget, then a Proposed budget which is based on the success of the Stewardship Campaign. The Member Recruiting Team is also busy prior to the spring Annual Meeting, recruiting members to serve on the various Teams.

Another Ministry will be profiled next month.

** This description of the Resource Ministry and the accompanying charts in this article are from the 2023 Annual Report.

Written by Adrienne Topliffe

Blankets for Bruce

Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, homelessness, and poverty are always with us. When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets program was created—to give a kind, loving, and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone.

When our neighbors are in need, \$10 for a single blanket goes a long way. A few years ago we renamed our congregation's annual Blankets + appeal to "Blankets for Bruce," in memory of Bruce Beckley, a beloved member of our church. This appeal was very near and dear to his heart and this is a special way to honor his passion for outreach.

Your contribution to the CWS Blankets program not only gives people around the world supplies to keep them safe and healthy, but also hope, warmth, and a reminder that they are loved.

How to donate:

- Use the special CWS Blankets envelopes in the pews.
- Not attending church in person? No problem!
- Mail a check to CCA, 11 Church Street, Amherst, and indicate "Blankets for Bruce" in the memo line.

Thank you for your support and for helping neighbors near and far stay warm.



Understanding the New Testament Wednesday Morning Adult Ed

February 7th and 21st
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 pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the Members Section under "Wednesday Adult Ed."

Understanding the New Testament - Upcoming Sessions

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"



Creative Worship

Sunday, February 18
10:00 a.m.

"The Patience of Job"

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 **February**, as we enter the season of Lent, we'll hear the story of **The Patience of Job**. This is the story of a man who loved God and had it all - wealth, health, and a loving family - and then all of it was taken away. The question we're left with is, "Why?" Why do bad things happen to good people? Where is God in our suffering? How do we reconcile our belief in a merciful and loving God with the existence of pain, injustice, and evil in our world? These are BIG questions. The story of Job gives us an opportunity to wrestle with the answers. We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!



February

Save the date!

SCUBA

Vacation Bible School 2024

August 12-16, 9:00 a.m. to Noon



Church School Calendar:

Church School will meet
Feb. 4th, Feb. 11th, and Feb. 18th.

*No Church School on Feb. 25th
due to school vacation.



What's Growing in the Greenhouse?

What's happening in February?

Senior High Youth Group (grades 9-12)

Meets Sunday evenings
4:30–6:00 p.m.

- February 4 Youth Group
- February 18 Youth Group

Middle School Youth Group (grades 5-8)

Meets February 4, 2:00-3:30 p.m.
at the Trampoline Park

Confirmation (grade 8)

- February 1, 6:30–8:00 p.m.
 - February 14 for
Ash Wednesday Service

Lenten Series

Wednesday Evenings on ZOOM

February 21 and 28

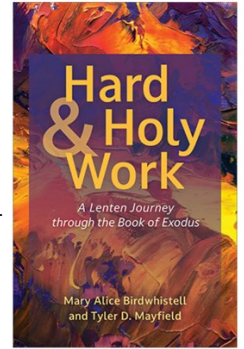
March 6, 13, 20, 27

6:30-8:00 p.m.

On six Wednesday evenings during Lent, we'll gather on Zoom to explore a wonderful and unique guide for our Lenten journey: **Hard and Holy Work**, by Mary Alice Birdwhistell and Tyler D. Mayfield. While the "work" of Lent often has us looking inward, to enact change in our hearts, this book also encourages us to look outward, to enact change in our world.

Framed as a journey through the book of Exodus and the story of the Hebrew people wandering in the wilderness, the authors encourage us to reflect on our own wilderness moments and our search for God in the troubling times of our lives and our everyday joys and uncertainties. At the same time, we're encouraged to pay attention to the stories and needs of the people whose journeys are much different than our own – the marginalized, the oppressed, the underserved and overlooked; the people Jesus calls us to walk alongside and serve in his name.

The book is available for order online and we'll have copies in the church office for purchase for \$15. The book takes us from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week and offers opportunities for reflection, discussion, and action, depending on what you're seeking from your Lenten journey. If you don't have the time or space to add a weekly reading to your plate join us anyway! We'll pull out passages to seed our discussion, and there's a weekly video to guide us as well. All are welcome to participate! RSVP to pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or find it on our church website in the Member's Section.



Good Stuff Sale Donations

It's time to spring clean your home and collect good stuff for the Woman's Associations' Annual Good Stuff Sale, which will be held Friday, April 28, 4:00–7:00 p.m., and Saturday, April 29, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. It would be helpful to have all clothing cleaned, sorted, bagged and possibly labeled for men, women, children and infants. We are collecting fine jewelry, costume and fun jewelry, good purses, backpacks, shoes, boots etc.; all accessories too. Household items: linens, sheets, towels, bedspreads, curtains, drapes, home decorative items, kitchen pots and pans, utensils, dishes, glassware, small appliances that work, small furniture, lamps, toys, games, puzzles, CDs, DVDs, books etc. You may leave bagged linens and clothing behind the curtain on the stage in the community room. Housewares, toys, glass, pots and pans etc. may be left in the vestry by the partition that says "Rummage Here." Please do NOT donate bicycles, large sports equipment, big furniture, computers, TVs, textbooks, car seats or baby furniture. All proceeds go to our charities and other needs within our church. Thank you so much! If you have any questions please contact Sally Bowkett, 603-673-7409 or Alicia Wight 603-345-0155



Join Us for a Second Hour Presentation on Caregiving

Sunday, March 10, 2024, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

"Honor your gifts." 1 Timothy 4:14



The Congregational Care Team will be holding an informational event on Caregiving. If you are providing caregiving to a family member, an adult child, in your home or living away or long distance, or perhaps a neighbor, being a caregiver brings many emotional, physical, and financial tolls on the most loving person. We will discuss support, coping, advocacy, and resources, locally and websites all related to caregiving.

The Rev. Charlotte Bell, MDIV, MSW is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and a member of CCA. She has spent over 25 years as a medical social worker, specializing in end-of-life support, bereavement, grief, geriatrics, oncology, and perinatal loss. Charlotte worked as a clinical social worker with a focus on gerontology, having worked in a variety of senior residential settings. She is trained and certified to support Alzheimer's patient's families, and caregivers. She facilitates a monthly Caregivers Support Group for Woodfords Congregational Church, UCC in Portland, ME.

Join us after worship and fellowship; get that extra cup of coffee and meet up in the parlor on the second floor opposite the church office at 11:30 am. If there are more people than chairs we will move to the sanctuary and meet informally there. Resources will be available for you to take.

Community Connections Event

The first graders of Clark and Wilkins schools in Amherst extend an invitation to any members of the senior community to join them for a shared activity and light lunch. The event will be at the Wilkins Elementary School on Friday, **February 9** from 9:45 to 11:00 a.m.

Please RSVP by Feb. 5 to ensure your spot and to let them know if you need transportation; they have partnered with the Amherst Recreation Dept. RSVP by calling 603-673-4411 or visit <https://forms.gle/qE35agM9ifTVoSuu7>



Auschwitz Not long ago. Not far away.

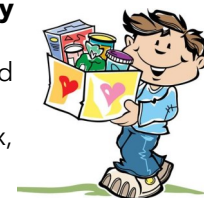
Our Racial Justice Group encourages all to visit this event opening soon in Boston for a limited engagement. Tickets and more information are available at theauschwitzexhibition.com.

SHARE Food Pantry

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

February Pantry

Requests include 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!



Financial Summary

(as of December 31, 2023)

	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$255,071	\$249,633	\$ 5,438
Expenses	\$236,466	\$244,668	\$ (8,202)
Net Income	\$ 18,604	\$ 4,965	\$13,639

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).



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

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But the fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness,
self-control ...



Galatians 5:22-23, ESV