

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

VILLAGE SPIRE

September 2024



An Altar in the World

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
September 2024

*And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left,
your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
"This is the way; walk in it." - Isaiah 30:21*



Rally Sunday is September 8!

We hope you will be with us as we celebrate the start of our new church program year. Church school resumes and the Chancel Choir will be back singing in worship.

Everyone is invited to **bring your school backpacks or work bags** for a special Back to School blessing offered by our pastors during the service.

All Church Picnic

After worship, please join us for our annual **all-church picnic**. Our Fellowship Team will be cooking up hamburgers and hot dogs, and we ask that folks who are able to contribute to please bring a side, salad or dessert to share. All ages welcome, and a donation of \$5/ adult, \$10 /family to help with costs will be gratefully accepted.

This year we are happy to have face painting and a clown making balloon animals. This is a wonderful opportunity to renew friendships and to make new ones while enjoying good food and fun games.

Rally Sunday is September 8th, and we're kicking off our fall regathering with a new church-wide theme: "AN ALTAR IN THE WORLD." Each month, our Creative Worship Sundays, our programs for children and youth, and our Small Group Ministry gatherings will focus on a different practice that inspires us to live our faith in our everyday lives and in our world. Inspired by the book of the same name written by the Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, our building of an altar in the world will be physical - as we're encouraged to set aside a space to commune with God outside of our church walls; and spiritual - as we find God in our work, play, passions, service, and everyday human experiences.

The practice of "Paying Attention" encourages us to see God all around us - in nature, in people, in the "God Sightings" that remind us that joy and hope are not as scarce as we think they are. The practice of "Encountering Others" invites us to hear the stories of those not like us, encouraging empathy and acts of service in our local communities. The practice of "Carrying Water" focuses on our everyday labors and how even the most mundane tasks offer an opportunity to reflect and connect with God. The practice of "Wearing Skin" reminds us that we are wonderfully made by our Creator, and that God became one of us in Jesus to experience what it is to be human. The practice of "Living with Purpose" reminds us that no matter what profession we've chosen in life, it's our passions - the things we love to do - that provide an opportunity to experience connection with others and with our God. The practice of "Being Present" encourages us to talk to God - anytime and anywhere - in prayer, in conversation, in our brightest and darkest moments. The practice of "Getting Lost" invites us to take a different road - to explore something new or challenging or scary - to expand our understanding of our own capabilities and "find" ourselves in the process. The practice of "Walking on the Earth" invites us to see Jesus walking beside us, setting an example for us and influencing our everyday interactions with others and with Creation itself. The practice of "Feeling Pain" gives us permission to seek God in our suffering and to find God in our rituals, scriptures, and songs of lament. Finally, the practice of "Saying No" reminds us that God commands us to set aside time for "sabbath" and rest, and a decluttering of our schedules and spirits is in fact a practice of our faith.

Continued on page 2

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
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. Prescott
Senior Pastor
pastormaureen@ccamherst.org

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

Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Larissa Riley
Director of Youth Ministries
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@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 our pastors.

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 or contact Pastor Maureen at 603-673-3231 x11,
pastormaureen@ccamherst.org



This year our Small Groups theme is "An Altar in the World." Each month we'll focus on a different practice to inspire us to live our faith in our everyday lives.

Schedule for 2023-2024

October:	Encountering Others
November:	Carrying Water
December:	Wearing Skin
January:	Living with Purpose
February:	Being Present
March:	Getting Lost
April:	Walking on the Earth
May:	Feeling Pain
June:	Saying No

 **September** 

An Altar in the World, continued from page 1

On Rally Day, we'll also be welcoming back our choirs, our church school, and many of you, as we transition from the slower pace of summer to the reinvigorated energy and activities of fall. As we regather, we'll see some familiar faces and some new faces on our church staff. Pastor Kevin's departure last June invited us to reimagine our full-time Associate Pastor position, and in doing so we created two new part-time positions. Our Church School Director, Larissa Riley, will step into the newly created role of Director of Youth Ministries, retaining the leadership of our church school, while also taking on the leadership of our middle school and high school youth groups, and our Confirmation program. Larissa brings many gifts to her ministry, including her exemplary skills as a teacher and leader, the relationships she's nurtured and built with our children and their parents, and her vision of creating a program for children and youth that gives them continuity, nurtures their curiosity and creativity, and brings them a sense of belonging to our whole church community.

We'll also be calling a part-time Associate Pastor, to assist with worship, pastoral care, adult programming, and whatever new ministries may arise in conjunction with their passions and gifts. By now you've likely heard that the Rev. Charlotte Bell has applied for the position, and our Pastoral Search Team has presented her as a candidate pending congregational approval. Charlotte will have her "Candidating Sunday" on October 13th, when she'll preach and lead worship, with a special congregational meeting held immediately afterward to vote on her call as our settled Associate Pastor. Charlotte has served churches all over New England, both as a settled pastor and as a "covering pastor" for churches where the pastorate or pulpit was open. She also brings a lifetime of experience in caring ministries, social work, and chaplaincy, and we're excited to see what will arise as she offers her gifts to our congregation.

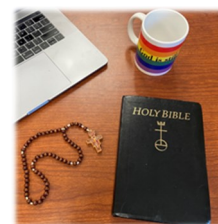
Amidst our pastoral search, one unexpected gift we received from the NH Conference was the invitation to host a Student Pastor in the coming year. In August, we welcomed Shellie Brook (see her bio elsewhere in this Spire!). Shellie has completed her seminary training and has experience serving in churches and as a chaplain. While she's with us she'll be doing a little bit of everything - assisting in worship and preaching, helping Larissa with Confirmation, and sitting in on Council and staff meetings to learn about church leadership. She'll also be working with our Widening Our Welcome Team and our Creative Worship Team, as one of her primary pastoral interests is to bring "church" to those who may not find it in traditional settings or in traditional worship.

It can feel a bit trite to say, "We're blessed!" but as we head into the fall with new additions to our staff, new ways of doing what we've been doing, and new ways of living into our faith, still to come, I for one feel like we have been blessed. God has a way of stepping into the spaces that we create when we open ourselves up to something new, and when we live more fully into what we've been doing all along: serving our God at an altar in the world.

September is here - welcome back, church!

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Maureen

Banned, Burned, and Buried: The Books NOT in the Bible begins Wednesday, September 18 10:00-11:30 a.m. on Zoom



The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Mary, The Gospel of Judas - Why are these gospels not in our Bible? What about the Book of Enoch, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Apocalypse of Peter? Why were these books and others like them considered to be controversial or heretical, and worthy only of inclusion in a supplemental "apocrypha" or left out of the Bible altogether?

This fall, we'll begin a year-long video lecture series delving into the "lost" books of the Bible. We'll look at the books of the Old Testament that are in some Bibles but not in others - including stories of giants, dragons, and fallen angels. We'll explore the "Gnostic" gospels and other writings NOT in our New Testament - that offer alternative understandings of who Jesus was, who and what God is, and what our spiritual purpose is as created beings.

In each session, we'll watch a video together as a group and then have a discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. The class will meet every first and third Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. from September through May on Zoom. All are welcome! Email [Pastor Maureen](mailto:PastorMaureen@church.org) to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the Members Section under "Wednesday Adult Ed."

Pastoral Search Results

The Ad Hoc Pastoral Search Team is pleased to announce the results of our summer long search for a new Associate Pastor. As we had previously shared with the congregation, based on what we perceived as the applicant pool, we used a dual approach to filling this position. One approach was to hire a full-time Associate Pastor who would handle both the pulpit and youth duties associated with the role. Our second path was a split responsibilities approach which would be to hire a lay person for all the youth responsibilities and a part-time Associate Pastor for the pulpit. Our preference was this latter approach for many reasons, among them a potentially better longer-term solution, a potentially better match of skills and interests to the position, and a broader candidate base. Pastors who would be amenable to filling both positions are a rare commodity these days, but a possibility none the less.

As a result of this dual path search, we are pleased to announce the following:

Youth

Larissa Riley applied for and has accepted the Search Team's offer to fill the newly created position of Director of Youth Ministries. She will be responsible for all youth programs, namely Church School (where she has currently been serving for a number of years), Middle School Youth Group, Senior High Youth Group, and Confirmation Class with assistance from our pastoral staff. This part-time, paid position will provide an overall continuity to our youth programs. Larissa will be a member of the church staff (as she currently is in her church school role) and will report administratively to Pastor Maureen.

Larissa brings new ideas, organizational and communication skills, and an amazing level of enthusiasm to this position. She has already exhibited these traits and more in her church school role and taking on new responsibilities is a natural and welcome progression for her.



Larissa Riley

Associate Pastor

The Reverend Charlotte Bell has applied for, and the Search Team will be recommending her to the congregation for approval to be our next settled Associate Pastor. In this part-time position, Charlotte's responsibilities will include fully supporting worship, pastoral care, and Confirmation class, as our Associate Pastors have traditionally been asked to do in the past. We tentatively expect to be asking the congregation to approve her in this position in the mid-October timeframe.

Charlotte has a broad and diverse background in social work, counseling, caregiver work, hospital chaplaincy, as well as being an ordained minister in the UCC. She has been Pastor and Teacher in two churches and has done extensive pulpit supply, all over the last 7 years. She has also been an active member of our church for years, singing in the choir, being a Congregational Care Team member, and a member of the WA to name just a few of her volunteer activities. She brings so many gifts and talents to this role. The Pastoral Search Team is proud to be recommending Charlotte Bell to be our next settled Associate Pastor.



Rev. Charlotte Bell

Team Thanks

As Team lead, I would like to recognize and thank the entire Pastoral Search Team for all the time and work done throughout the summer to fill these two positions. We think the church will be in a good place for both our youth programs and spiritual growth with Larissa and Charlotte joining our church staff in their new roles. And another plus is the Search Team can now have the rest of their summer off!

Your Ad Hoc 2024 Pastoral Search Team

Rev. Shayna Appel

Steve Boczenowski

Sally Bowkett

Gretchen Davis

Rev. Maureen Frescott

Dave Hagerstrom

Sue Ruggiero

John Swanson

Doug Topliffe (lead)

Staffing Updates



Welcome to CCA, Shellie!

As we continued our search for a new Associate Pastor, the New Hampshire Conference offered our congregation the opportunity to host a student pastor for the 2024-25 program year. On Sunday, August 18, we welcomed Shellie Anne Brook! As a student pastor, Shellie will serve our congregation for 10-15 hours per week, participating in and leading worship, preaching, assisting with our Confirmation class and youth groups, and bringing her energy and creativity to our Creative Worship services and our WOW (Widening Our Welcome) Team.

Born and raised in Lancaster County, PA, Shellie grew up in the peace church denomination of the Brethren in Christ. A favorite story her mom shares is when Shellie was 8-years-old she asked during lunchtime "Does Jesus like pizza? Because if he lives inside me, he's having pizza right now." On a mission and service trip to Zambia at 16-years-old, Shellie heard the Spirit of God calling her to "pastor the peoples." She was filled with joy and wonder yet had not experienced women in pastoral leadership before. Nevertheless, she persisted.

Shellie attended Eastern University, graduating in 2005 with a BA in Anthropology and a minor in Biblical Studies, and graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary with an MDiv in 2009. She served as a hospital chaplain in Hunterdon Medical Center (NJ) and churches in a variety of Christian denominations in PA, NJ and NH leading worship, preaching/teaching, and pastoral care.

In 2017 she was called into hospice chaplaincy – as she often says, "hospice found me." Still throughout this journey she did not yet find her denominational home – a place of true belonging where all are welcome - until she came to the UCC in 2019. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Shellie was drawn to the UCC's continuing testament and the ever widening welcome of God made known in Christ.

Shellie has spent 7 years as a hospice chaplain and is now a hospice consultant, advocate & educator. Both personally and professionally, Shellie brings lived experience in holding space through the complexities, diversities and layered nuances of spirituality and authentic belonging, grace in the grieving, relational connections toward hope and healing, and the wide welcome of true community. She describes herself as a sacred storyteller, champion of potential and possibility.

Shellie and her wife, Rebecca (a hospice nurse), live in Goffstown with their six children and two dogs. She (and they) look forward to journeying with us in community during this season, sharing a message of hope that all are loved and beloved of God. We hope you can join us on Rally Sunday (September 8) where we'll participate in a congregational covenant with Shellie during worship as we commit to walking together during the coming year!



Shellie Brook



Woman's Association's Monday Meetings Resume

The weekly Monday Morning Workshops of the Woman's Association will resume on September 9, 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, work on projects, 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](#).

No Fall Good Stuff Sale, but Fair Treasures are Wanted

The Woman's Association will not be holding a Good Stuff Sale this Fall. The next sale will tentatively be held on May 2 and 3, 2025. 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 2025.

However, we are accepting items suitable for our Holiday Fair's Treasures Table. Treasures items can be dropped off in the church vestry on Sunday or Monday mornings, beginning Sept. 8. Please call Theresa van Ham with any questions about Treasures donations.

Blessing of the Backpacks

On Rally Day, **Sunday, September 8** 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.



From the Director of Youth Ministries

It's time to kick off a new year of youth activities! As the director, I will be leading all programs for children from preschool through 12th grade. Whether you call them children, kids, tweens, preteens or teens, they are all part of "Youth Ministries" here at CCA. Our current programs include Church School, Confirmation Class, Youth Groups, and Vacation Bible School.

Church School begins on September 8 for all children in preschool through 7th grade. Registration forms are available on the church website or can be picked up before church any Sunday. We will have three classes this year, separated by age: Preschool-Kindergarten, Elementary (1st - 4th grade), and Middle School (5th-7th grade).

Youth Groups will begin later this month. I am working with the returning advisors to plan a variety of fun community-building activities and service opportunities for the coming year. Once we have meeting dates and times set, we will share them through church communications including the Sunday bulletin and Friday "News from the Pews."

Confirmation Class for students in 8th grade and older will also be starting this fall. Keep an eye out for an announcement about our first informational meeting that will be scheduled soon.

Vacation Bible School (VBS) just wrapped up on August 16. Children and volunteers all had a great time! Be sure to check out the pictures posted on the Church School tab of the the CCA website. Planning for VBS 2025 will begin in January.

Please let me know if you would like more information about any of these programs. I hope to see you all on Rally Sunday!

Larissa Riley, Director of Youth Ministries

Creative Worship September 15, 10:00 a.m.

Mark your calendars! Our monthly Creative Worship returns on the third Sunday in September! This year our theme is AN ALTAR IN THE WORLD. Each month we'll focus on a different "practice" to inspire us to live our faith in the world and in our everyday lives. Our Creative Worship services blend 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 theme and scripture in their class time.

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

September 15	The Practice of PAYING ATTENTION
October 20	The Practice of ENCOUNTERING OTHERS
November 17	The Practice of CARRYING WATER
December 15	The Practice of WEARING SKIN
January 19	The Practice of LIVING WITH PURPOSE
February 16	The Practice of BEING PRESENT
March 16	The Practice of GETTING LOST
April 27	The Practice of WALKING ON THE EARTH
May 18	The Practice of FEELING PAIN
June 15	The Practice of SAYING NO

An Altar
in the World
The Practice of...

Paying Attention
Encountering Others
Carrying Water
Wearing Skin
Living with Purpose
Being Present
Getting Lost
Walking on the Earth
Feeling Pain
Saying No

From the Director of Music

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 in a choir.

The *Youth Choir* is for children 1st grade and older, and we meet in the vestry right after church on Sundays (beginning September 15).

Children in Pre-K and Kindergarten will be singing songs in church school.

Voices of Creation is our choir for older kids, and 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.

Please contact me with questions!

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 a black top and 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?

This group will meet after church on Sundays as well. There will be some overlap with the groups.

Please reach out to me to sign up for a choir! See you on Rally Day, September 8.

See you all soon!

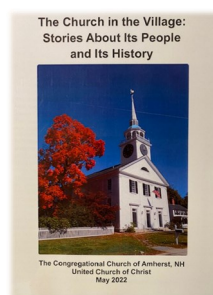
[Sara Phelps](#), Director of Music



The Church in the Village: Stories About Its People and Its History by Anne Krantz

It has been two years since we printed *The Church in the Village: Stories About Its People and Its History* and it was a sellout! The book is a compilation of 55 articles that Anne Krantz wrote and were printed monthly in the *Spire* over several years.

Several people have indicated interest in purchasing a copy so we are considering a reprint. If you are interested, please contact [Sue Spiess](#) so we can gauge the number to order.



SHARE Food Pantry

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

September Pantry Requests:

condiments,
cooking sauces
and seasonings,
cooking oil,
pasta sauce, tomato
sauce, tomato paste,
diced tomatoes



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!

Beware of Email and Text Scams

We continue to hear, on occasion, of folks receiving a spam email or text message disguising itself as being from Pastor Maureen. Often the request is for assistance purchasing gift cards. If you receive one of these suspicious emails or text messages, please do not click on any links or reply to the message - just delete it.



This type of spam is one that many pastors and churches are dealing with these days. The scammer takes public information and pretends to be someone you trust.

If you are unsure if an email you received appearing to be from us is fake, just hover over the sender's name/email with your mouse. If it is legitimate, the return email address will show that is from @ccamherst.org. If you don't see that, it is not from us.

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

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Save the Date!



Holiday Fair

Saturday November 23rd

Congregational Church

11 Church St. Amherst



**Silent Auction
Bakery
Treasures
Pecans**



**Cabot Cheese
Jewelry**



Knits



**Wreaths
Raffle Baskets**



Crafts

September 2024

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