



VILLAGE SPIRE

March 2025

ASH WEDNESDAY MARCH 5



SERVICE 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

Sign of the Times

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
March 2025

Here's a survey question we can all easily answer: How long have you been coming to our church?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 20-30 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-40 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 40 + years |

The box you check above may also provide insight into how you arrived at our church. For those who came 20 to 40+ years ago, the answer to this question is most often one of the following: "I grew up in this church" or, "I moved and went in search of a church" or, "I left my previous church and went in search of one that was a better fit." This search typically involved seeking out a congregation of a particular denomination or taking note of the churches one saw around town, or even looking in the Yellow Pages (there's a blast from the past), and through the trial-and-error process of "church shopping" a good fit was eventually found.

For those who've been here less than 20 years, and especially for those who've been here less than ten, the process of finding a church has looked much different. An internet search was likely involved, where one might get a sense of a church's identity by perusing its website - the welcome and belief statements, program descriptions, event announcements, outreach efforts, and newsletter and sermon archives. This "try before you buy" form of church shopping means that many of our new arrivals know a good deal about us before we've even met them. Yet, the "welcome" and sense of connection one feels upon arrival is still a key reason why visitors choose to return.

What sets our more recent arrivals apart from our more long-term attendees is the journey that preceded the search. Few people nowadays move to a new town and look for a new church in the same way they may look for a new dentist or hairdresser. And when people leave one church behind, more and more are choosing to not seek out another. Those who arrive on our doorstep today typically come after a long period of wondering and longing for some form of spiritual connection for themselves or for their children. They may have been raised in a church, or not. Their previous experience of church may have been benign, uninspired, exclusionary, or hurtful, giving them little reason to seek out another. They may have once held the assumption that most Christian churches are the same, based on their experience or what they see in the wider culture, and they saw no need to create space for one in their lives. Our historic white church on the green may have added ascetic value to their small-town experience but it was just a church like any other - one they drove by while running Sunday errands or while taking their kids to soccer games.



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

Rev. Charlotte E. Y. Bell
Associate Pastor
pastorcharlotte@ccamherst.org

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

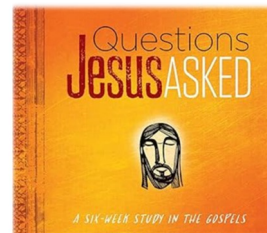
Michael Havay
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Larissa Riley
Director of Youth Ministries
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@ccamherst.org

Lenten Supper Series "Questions Jesus Asked"

Wednesday Evenings During Lent
March 12, 19, 26 - April 2, 9, 16
6:30-8:00 p.m.



Join us on six Wednesday evenings during Lent as we gather for a simple supper of soup and bread and explore six questions that Jesus asked in our Gospels that reflect the joys and challenges of being human:

"Why are you afraid?" (Matthew 8:23-27)
"Why are you anxious?" (Luke 12:25-31)
"What are you looking for?" (John 1:35-38)
"What do you live for?" (Mark 8:34-38)
"Whom will you love?" (Luke 6:27-36)
"Who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:18-20)

How might you respond to each of these questions?
How might our faith guide us as we seek clarity?

We'll gather in the second floor parlor for soup and then watch a short video before engaging in an informal discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. The video series is produced by United Methodist pastor, the Rev. Magrey deVega. The series has a companion book that participants are welcome to read, but it's not necessary. All you need to bring is your appetite and your wonderings! Those who can't be present in person are welcome to Zoom in for the video and discussion, and for supper as well if you'd like to eat with us from afar! Email pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to RSVP or to receive the Zoom link.



Banned, Burned, and Buried: The Books NOT in the Bible

Wednesday, March 5th
10:00-11:30 a.m. on Zoom

Join us for this last session of our video lecture series as we delve into the "lost" books of the Bible. In this session we'll explore the Gospel of Mary, one of the more popular "Gnostic" gospels, and the only gospel attributed to one of Jesus' female followers, Mary Magdalene. We'll watch the video together as a group and then have a discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. All are welcome to join us even if you've missed all of our other sessions! Send an email to pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link.

Sign of the Times, continued from page 1

What sets most of our more recent arrivals apart is this: they discovered something about our church and how we are different before they even thought to step through our doors. Some came because trusted neighbors and friends attend here, and as always, a personal recommendation or connection goes a long way. Some came because they stumbled across our livestream online, and they took note of our message, our welcome, our outreach, our music, or the presence of children and youth, and after watching for a while, realized that our community was one they wanted to be a part of. Some came because they noticed something different about how we presented ourselves to the community – on our website, at our table on the Fourth of July, on the banner we hung on our church every year just before Rally Day: our “Welcoming to All”, our “God’s Doors are Open to All”, our rainbow – which many have said told them instantly that they would be welcome, their family would be welcome, that we offered an inclusive understanding of God’s love that matched the values they wanted to teach their children.

And when I say, “many” have said this, I do mean many. Because I’ve been hearing this from a good number of our more recent arrivals. I recently sat down and made a list of those who’ve explicitly said they’re here because of our rainbow-inspired welcome, and I filled two pages of a legal pad with names. People who’ve showed up on our doorstep in the last five to ten years who are now active in our church school, our choirs, our outreach, our Deacons, our Woman’s Association, and in our wider community.

Some may question the effectiveness of websites and banners and signs and rainbows – and rightfully so, as these things were at one time not needed, or they feel too much like secular marketing or pandering, or because they may even turn some people off. Rainbows in particular make some uncomfortable because of an implied political ideology that is assumed to go along with it. But those who continue to find us, when they didn’t even know that they were seeking, speaks to the longing that so many are feeling – a longing for a God whose embrace is so much wider than our own.

When I look at the names on the list I compiled, and think of the love each person on that list pours into our community and our world, as do those who came to us in an earlier time in a more traditional way, I naturally wonder what our church might look like had each one of us never “found” what we were looking for here in our 284-year-old congregation. Our world has changed in the last 40+ years, as it did in the 250 years prior, and our church has changed along with it. What hasn’t changed is our call to be the loving, grace-filled, arms-wide-open presence of God for one another. May we continue to live into this call, and see it and show it for others, in the signs all around us.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Maureen

CCA Celebrates Charlotte!



All Congregational Church
of Amherst
Members and Friends
are invited to join us on
Sunday, March 23 at 3:00 p.m.
for the Installation of
The Rev. Charlotte E.Y. Bell
as our settled Associate Pastor!

A celebration of the Hillsborough
Association and the New
Hampshire Conference of the
United Church of Christ

Guest Preacher:
The Rev. Dr. Mary Luti

Our Chancel Choir will sing as well!

A reception will follow in our
Community Room



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:
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.

Small Groups allow 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.

Remaining Schedule for 2025

March: (no meeting)

April: Walking on the Earth

May: Getting Lost

June: Saying No

An Altar in the World Worship *The Practice of Being Present to God*

March 16 - 10:00 a.m.

On the third Sunday of every month, our 10:00 a.m. worship celebrates our church-wide theme - 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.

In March, we'll explore "The Practice of Being Present to God" (which was postponed in February due to snow!). Prayer is said to be a central part of the Christian life, yet many of us struggle to embrace it in a practical way outside of Sunday morning. We'll explore the big questions many of us have about prayer: How do we pray? What do we pray about? And why do we pray? Our children will participate in the beginning of the service before heading off to Church School to engage the theme in their class time.

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



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.

SHARE Food Pantry

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

March Pantry Requests:

canned fruit, flour, sugar, coffee & tea,
juice, instant rice, cold cereal,
instant oatmeal packets, individually wrapped snacks

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!



Widening Our Welcome

The WOW Team is an informal group from our congregation that meets regularly to brainstorm ways to make our church more welcoming to more people. The group kicked off in the fall of 2023 to talk about what it means to take our Opening & Affirming pledge to the next step. The team, which consists of Pastor Maureen Frescott, Pastor Charlotte Bell, Pastor Shellie Brook, Rev. Shayna Appel, Larissa Riley, Vicky Leknes, Bruce Kinney, and Steve Boczenowski, quickly decided that the next phase in our Open & Affirming mission should consist of broadening our welcome to all members of our society, with a current focus on members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people of color, and people with physical challenges. With that in mind, the group decided to call themselves the Widening Our Welcome Team, or the WOW Team.

Some of the activities of the WOW Team thus far include making pronoun stickers available for name badges; participating in the Milford Pride event; and hosting a second hour presentation on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion; and YANA.

YANA is an attempt to provide a sacred and safe space for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. YANA (You Are Not Alone) meets monthly, beginning in January 2025 and provides social time (with refreshments) and includes a presentation. In January, GLAD Staff Attorney Michael Haley, addressed the gathering and in February Harvey Feldman and Jess Smith of Granite Pride talked about Queer Joy.

If you'd like to know about the WOW Team or any of its activities, feel free to reach out to any of the members.



Pictured: Jess Smith and Harvey Feldman of Granite Pride speak to YANA on Queer Joy in February 2025.



Good Stuff Sale Donations

This year's Woman's Association "Good Stuff Sale" will be held on May 2nd and 3rd. It's a great opportunity to look around your home for things you might want to donate to this fundraiser to support the church and community organizations. The sale includes clothing and accessories, jewelry, household items, toys and much more. Here is some information about what donations are accepted - and where to put your donations.

Clothing and linens: It is helpful to have all clothing donations cleaned, sorted, bagged and labeled (men, women, children, infants). You may leave bagged clothing and linens (sheets, towels, bedspreads, curtains, etc.) behind the curtain on the stage in the Community Room or in the drop-off area in the Vestry.

Household items: home decorative items, kitchen pots and pans, utensils, dishes, glassware, small appliances that work, small furniture, lamps, toys, games, and puzzles.

In addition to clothing and household goods, we always appreciate donations of jewelry - fine jewelry, costume and fun jewelry, as well as good purses, backpacks, shoes, boots and accessories.

Donations may be left in the Vestry by the partition that says "Good Stuff Sale donations here." Please **DO NOT** donate bicycles, large sports equipment, big furniture, computers, TVs, car seats, baby furniture or stuffed animals. In the past we have accepted books, but we are not able to do that this year.

If you have any questions please contact Sally Bowkett, 603-673-7409 or Alicia Wight 603-345-0155.

WA Sunday is March 9

Be sure to "spring forward" on Saturday night, March 8, so you won't miss the worship service on WA Sunday (March 9). Members of the Woman's Association will participate in the service and then host the fellowship time in the Community Room following the service. All are invited!

There will be a number of pieces of artwork on display at this time, art that has been donated to the WA, and attendees are invited to select one or more pieces of art to take home. The price? Free - or whatever you choose to donate.

For more information, contact Kay Steeves (kksteeves@gmail.com).





Youth Ministries News

Church School: After two snow cancellations and school vacation, we are excited to get back to Church School on Sunday, March 2! Church School classes will meet during worship every Sunday in March.

Junior Youth Group: All 5th, 6th, and 7th graders are invited to JYG on the First Sunday of each month at 11:30AM (after worship). Upcoming Meeting dates: March 2 and April 6.

Senior Youth Group: All 8th - 12th grade students are invited to come to Senior Youth Group Meetings or events. March Meetings: Sunday, March 9 and Sunday, March 23, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

March Events:

Saturday 3/15: SYG teens are encouraged to attend the special Saturday "JOY" Service at 5:30 p.m. and help serve pancakes in the community room after the service!

Fri 3/28: Overnight Lock-In and Mission Trip Training

Confirmation: March Meetings: 3/6 and 3/20 at 6:30 p.m.



True North Vacation Bible School

It's time for kids to hit the trail...for adventure! True North Vacation Bible School will be filled with awesome Bible-learning experiences that kids can see, hear, and touch! Hands-on science experiments, team-building games, unforgettable music, and tasty treats are just a few of the standout activities that help faith flow into real life.

Dates: August 4 - 8, 2025

Time: 9:00 a.m. - noon each day

Ages: 3 years old* through rising 5th graders can participate as VBS campers

*must be potty trained and comfortable separating from parents

Cost: \$25 per child (financial assistance is available)

Youth Volunteers: Rising 6th - 12th grade students are needed to help guide younger children through the activities. There is no cost and we will sign off on service hours if needed (school, scouts, or honor societies).

Registration opens online soon and will be available on the Church website.

Contact Larissa Riley at churchschool@ccamherst.org with questions about any of our Youth Programs.

March 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1)
2) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Junior Youth Group	3) 10:00 WA Workshop 6:00 Capital Campaign Team	4) 4:30 Church Council 7:00 Trustees of the Facility	5) 10:00 Wednesday Morning Adult Ed Group 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service	6) 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:30 Chancel Choir	7)	8)
9) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:15 Racial Justice Group 6:00 Senior Youth Group	10) 10:00 WA Workshop	11) 10:00 WA Board Meeting 7:00 Diaconate	12) 9:30 Staff Meeting 6:00 Budget & Finance Team 6:30 Lenten Study Series	13) 10:00 Congregational Care 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	14)	15) 5:00 Alternative Worship Service
16) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Christian Ed	17) 10:00 WA Workshop	18) 10:00 Caregivers Circle 7:00 Communications	19) 6:30 Lenten Study Series	20) 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:30 Chancel Choir	21)	22)
23) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 3:00 Installation Service 6:00 Senior Youth Group	24) 10:00 WA Workshop	25) 10:00 WA Workshop	26) 9:30 Staff Meeting 6:30 Lenten Study Series	27) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	28) Senior Youth Group Lock In	29)
30) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir	31) 10:00 WA Workshop 7:00 World Service Team					

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

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