



VILLAGE SPIRE

September 2025

LOVE
⇒ JESUS ⇐
grows
in faith
CHANGE
THE WORLD

Rally Day is September 7

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.

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 is a wonderful opportunity to renew friendships and to make new ones while enjoying good food and fun games.

Welcome Back, Church!

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
September 2025

As we wave goodbye to sultry summer days, move into cooler September days, and see “pumpkin spice” popping everywhere, we once again face the inevitable: fall is here! And with the arrival of the new season comes the return of all that our congregation holds dear: our Chancel and Bell Choirs, our Church School and Youth Groups, our Confirmation and Adult Education classes, our Woman’s Association gatherings and Ministry Team meetings, and more hands to help with our Home Starter Program, SHARE support, and other outreach efforts.

Of course, all of the above hums along in the background all summer long, as planning meetings are held, summer worship music is arranged, furniture and food deliveries are made, and our Vacation Bible School fills our church with laughter, learning, and joy. But the arrival of Rally Sunday on September 7th is a call to regather, as we celebrate the return of those who’ve been away, welcome new faces, and launch our programs and ministries, both returning and new.

Something new we’re doing this year is offering **Confirmation for Adults!** Have you ever wondered:

Where is God moving in our world?

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?

How do we read the Bible and is it still relevant today?

Why are there so many Christian churches and how are they different?

What is a “spiritual journey” anyway???

These are the big questions our youth ask and seek answers to in their year-long confirmation class before choosing to confirm their commitment to being a follower of Christ. As people of faith, we’re encouraged to continue to ask these questions throughout our lives. Regardless of what faith tradition you were raised in (or not), or confirmed in (or not), or what

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Frederick Douglass Statewide Reading

At noontime on Saturday, June 28, 2025, the Congregational Church of Amherst, along with members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Milford, and the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour in Milford, as well as numerous community members participated in the state-wide reading of the speech written by Frederick Douglass, **“What to the Slave is Your Fourth of July?”** The event was conducted in the sanctuary of the Congregational Church of Amherst, and refreshments and fellowship occurred at the end of the reading in the vestry. This was the 4th annual reading of this speech at the CCA, and one of nineteen held across the State of New Hampshire.

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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. 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
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michaelh117@gmail.com

Larissa Riley
Director of Youth Ministries
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@ccamherst.org

Frederick Douglass Statewide Reading, continued from page 1



Participants in the June 28 reading.

Approximately 40 people attended this event and remarks were heard all around about the meaningfulness of this reading both historically and in our present day. Seventeen readers three parishes and the community shared in this sacred event, reading a portion of the speech at the microphone in front of the congregation. Singers from the Unitarian Universalist Church, the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, the Congregational Church of Amherst, and local volunteers, under the direction of chorus leaders David and Ken Kjellander, and Amy Conley shared music that lifted our spirits and provided hope for a more unified future. The chorus opened the event with **'Like a Mighty Stream'** and ended the reading with **'We Shall Not Be Moved,'** a sing-along in which all were able to participate.

Mr. Douglass, a renowned abolitionist and orator, was asked to deliver a speech celebrating independence from England as part of the July 4th, 1852 festivities in Rochester, NY. In addressing the Independence Day observance, Mr. Douglass's speech was a blistering indictment of an American idealism that ignored and accepted the inhuman treatment of enslaved African Americans as part of the country's identity and economy. Ironically, even though Douglass' words spoke directly to this moment in history, they still ring with an unsettling power today. His words, echoing through time, continue to resonate with profound relevance, prompting critical examination of America's past and present. As we commemorate the ideals of freedom and justice, let us also commit to advancing the unfinished work of equality for all.

Special thanks are extended to Gail Miller for coordinating this event, to Joan Egbertson for organizing the refreshments, and to all of the members of the Congregational Church of Amherst Racial Justice Team who worked tirelessly over the last six months to make this event happen.

Submitted by The CCA Racial Justice Team

Welcome Back, Church! continued from page 1

faith experiences you've had as an adult, if you've ever been envious of our youth for having the opportunity to explore their faith in this intentional way, now you have the opportunity as well! The class will consist of 16 sessions, meeting Wednesdays on Zoom twice a month from October to May. We'll have evening and morning sessions to accommodate busy schedules. Upon completion of the program, participants may choose to be "confirmed" along with our youth or simply celebrate the journey we'll travel together! See the *Spire* article in this issue for information on how to participate.

Another "new thing" we're doing this year, is incorporating our Church School themes into our Sunday worship, rather than the other way around. Instead of following the Common Lectionary of scripture readings in worship and adapting them for our Church School classes (which is not always easy to do), this year we're using a new curriculum called **"SHINE: Living in God's Light"** for both our worship and our Church School. It's long been our goal to celebrate the intergenerational nature of our church community by creating congruity and connection in our worship and programming. The SHINE curriculum incorporates the traditional church seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter) and uses its own three-year cycle of scripture readings to tell the stories of our faith. We'll also continue to have a "themed worship" on the third Sunday of each month, which we're calling SHINE SUNDAYS. Our themed worship allows us to step out of the box (a bit!) from our traditional worship, with interactive readings, creative reflections, and engaging activities.

Like many of you, I savor the pause we have over the summer from all of our program-year busyness. But I also look forward to our regathering in the fall. The slower pace of the summer provides breathing space and space for renewal, but I cherish the arrival of Rally Sunday - when our sanctuary is once again filled with the voices of our choir, the laughter of our children, and the presence of all of you. I know Pastor Charlotte would agree, when we walk into the chancel at the beginning of worship each Sunday, hearing the joyful chatter of the gathering congregation, we feel truly blessed to be here, and to be a part of this beloved community of Christ. Welcome back, church!

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Maureen



Shine Sunday September 21, 10:00 a.m.

Mark your calendars! Our monthly Themed Worship returns on the third Sunday in September! This year our theme is **SHINE: Living in God's Light.**

Each month we'll focus on the ways we are the presence of God for one another in matters of mercy, compassion, and justice. Our Themed Worship services blend our traditional order of worship with special music and interactive liturgies, readings, 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 21	Welcoming Everyone
October 19	Caring for Others
November 16	Enough for All
December 21	God with Us
January 18	Sermon on the Mount
February 15	God's Generosity
March 15	Righting Our Wrongs
April 19	Breakfast on the Beach
May 17	God's Will Be Done

Woman's Association's Monday Meetings Resume

The weekly Monday Morning Workshops of the Woman's Association will resume on September 8th, from 10:00 a.m. until noon 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, to work on projects, or to just enjoy the fellowship of the group. Coffee, tea and a snack 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 at 673-7436 or abtopliffe@gmail.com.

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 1 and 2, 2026. 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 2026.

However, we are now 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 at 603-654-6445 with any questions about Treasures donations.

Bereavement Support Group



Loss is a part of everyone's life at some point, and each person reacts to loss in a personal way. As well as the emotional response, loss also has a physical, intellectual, behavioral, social and philosophical aspect.

People's losses, no matter what, are important and can be devastating to them. They represent the disappearance of something or someone cherished. A loss can consist of a death, divorce, loss of a job, a pet, health, relationships or a treasured possession.

The Bereavement Group will be for anyone over age 18 who is grieving a loss and would like to attend a monthly support session. We will discuss shared insights and grief education, and group conversation. The group will be limited to 8 people. You do not need to be a member of this church to attend and there is no cost involved.

The group will be facilitated by the Rev. Charlotte Bell, MDIV, MSW. Pastor Charlotte holds a Certificate in Spiritual And Pastoral Care from Andover Newton Theological School, and has experience in leading bereavement groups and coping with grief as a medical social worker.

The first Bereavement Group meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. in the church's parlor. Thereafter the meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of the month. Light refreshments will be available. Please contact Pastor Charlotte if you are interested in attending by reaching her at pastorcharlotte@ccamherst.org or call her at 603-673-3231 x14 and leave a message.



WA Holiday Fair

Once again the Woman's Association will hold its popular Holiday Fair this fall on Saturday, November 22. The fair features wreaths and holiday decorations, a large selection of crafts, treasures/gifts, baked goods, a silent auction, a raffle and much more. It's always on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, so the date is easy to remember.

It's also easy to be part of this special event. The WA welcomes the participation of those interested in the preparation leading up to the fair - and there are many ways to participate!

Crafts are an important part of the fair offerings, so if you would like to join others in crafting activities, please join us for workshops on Monday mornings at 10:00, starting September 8th in the vestry. Also, if you would like to donate crafts made at home, they will be gratefully accepted.

Treasures: We will be accepting items suitable for our Holiday Fair's Treasures Table beginning September 8. Treasures items can be dropped off in the church vestry on Sunday or Monday mornings.

Questions? For more information about crafts, you can contact: Deb Boczenowski at dbocz25@gmail.com or 978-302-3851

For questions about Treasures donations, contact Theresa van Ham at twvham@gmail.com or 603-325-5062.

For questions about the Woman's Association, contact Adrienne Topliffe at abtopliffe@gmail.com or 603-913-7565 or talk to any WA member!

Watch *The Spire* and *News from the Pews* for more information.

Adult Confirmation: A Spiritual Journey

16 Sessions - October to May

Wednesday mornings and evenings on ZOOM

Beginning in October, we're inviting the adults in our congregation to embark on a year-long journey, as we focus on the same big questions our youth ask and seek to answer in their Confirmation class (see topics below). This class is open to all, regardless of what faith tradition you were raised in (or not) or confirmed in (or not). Upon completion of the program, participants may choose to be "confirmed" along with our youth or simply celebrate the journey we'll travel together!

In each session, we'll watch videos and engage in discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. Email pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the Members Section under "Wednesday Adult Ed."

Sessions will be held twice a month, on Wednesday mornings and evenings, on ZOOM.

Our morning class will meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. Our evening class will meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Participants are welcome to attend either class as your schedule allows. If you miss the morning session one week, feel free to join us in the evening the following week, or vice versa!

SCHEDULE AND TOPICS: (first date listed is a.m., second date listed is p.m.)

Oct 1, 8	What We Believe: Our Big and Small Questions
Oct 15, 22	God: How and Where Do We See God?
Nov 5, 12	Jesus: Teacher, Prophet, or Savior?
Nov 19, 26	Holy Spirit: Blowing in the Wind
Dec 3	The Bible: Is the Old Testament Relevant?
Dec 17	The Bible: Gospels, Letters, and Prophecy, Oh My!
Jan 7, 14	Christian History: Roots to Reformation
Jan 21, 28	Christian History: Denominational Differences
Feb 4, 11	United Church of Christ: Who Are We?
Feb 18, 25	Worship and The Christian Calendar
Mar 4, 11	Sacraments: Communion and Baptism
Mar 18, 25	Spiritual Practices: Prayer and Reflection
Apr 1, 8	Suffering: Why Bad Things Happen to Good People
Apr 15, 22	Discipleship: Living Our Faith Every Day
May 6, 13	World Religions: What Do Others Believe?
May 20, 27	What We Believe: Our Personal Statement of Faith



SHARE Food Pantry

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

September Pantry Requests:

canned ham, canned meats/tuna/chicken, mac and cheese, pasta (all sorts), Progresso and Chunky soups



Donations may be left in the SHARE container in the narthex, or 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!

Milford Rotary Raffle Results



Thank you to all church members and friends who bought raffle tickets to the recent Milford Rotary 100 Holes of Golf Raffle fundraiser. Our church sold 127 tickets, which netted the church \$1,270. In addition, since CCA sold the third largest number of tickets, it received a gift certificate for a round of golf for up to 4 players at Souhegan Woods. That certificate was auctioned off with the winning bid from one of our members of \$150. And, as happened last year, one of our church members was the lucky winner of one of the cash prizes.

Thanks so much to Judi Dunbar and Doug Topliffe who coordinated this successful fundraiser.





Don and Carol Lyon

Who Sits in the Pews (and Online)? (a.k.a. "Know Your Neighbor")

Meet Don and Carol Lyon

Faith, friendship and purpose—those are the treasures that Don and Carol Lyon, former Presbyterians from New York by way of Pennsylvania, gleaned and gifted during their 40-year stint worshipping and serving with the CCA before moving into a Keene continuing care community over the summer. And it all began with member Bruce Beckley's invitation to a church dinner.

"I really loved the people," said Don about his maiden mealtime experience with the congregation. He had come north for a manufacturing job and was getting settled in before sending for Carol and their four children. "[Carol and I] are both believers and are open to everybody, which is one of the things that we like about the UCC here [and] that night at dinner everybody was just so friendly!" he exclaimed, recalling the easy camaraderie of that long ago evening. "[Even today] there always is someone in the church who will talk to you, say 'hello' to you."

Don is definitely a people person. "The people make the church, and the recognition that we're [all] different is important. But that we can find things that we agree on, that's what makes the church," says Don, who over time put his people skills into practice here as deacon, moderator, trustee, conference delegate (and eventually moderator) of the former Hillsborough Association and even as president of the NH Conference of the UCC. His ability to remain calm and levelheaded, coupled with his ardent philosophy of direct, cordial communication—talking things out—served him well and aided those who sought his counsel.

"The church has been great to me. I've met a lot of very nice people throughout NH through the church... Talking brings back a lot of good memories—there are so many," said Don.

Carol, a former nurse, concurs with Don's sentiment about the church's strong impact on their lives. "I guess that's the thing I could say about [the impact of] our whole experience with this church—the people we have met and worked with while doing hopefully good works. And the church has grown so much! They have so many different opportunities to be a good helper," she said. "I loved being a deacon, and Congregational Care, prayer shawl ministry, our Woman's Association, and the Open and Affirming group." Like her husband, Carol also served for many years as a conference delegate.

"[It's been] the very best part of our journey, worshipping with that wonderful community. It's just been so nurturing and provides an opportunity for outreach—just so much comes out of that," Carol said.

Acknowledging the emotional difficulty of moving away from our congregation, Carol hopes that she and Don can remain connected with the CCA online while embracing their new Keene UCC community. Look for their updated contact information in the CCA's online church directory.

We wish the Lyons well in Keene.

Ringling and Singing at the Congregational Church of Amherst!

The Chancel Choir will resume rehearsals on Thursday, September 4 at 7:30 p.m. in the vestry.

The Bell Choir resumes that evening as well at 6:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Are you interested in being a part of our music program? Come join us!

Please contact Sara Phelps, Director of Music, with questions:

kalben1@comcast.net
(603) 759-6468



Youth Choir ☺

We will gather on Sunday, September 14 after church in the vestry! Come join us for singing, games and fun. Open to all ages!



Youth Ministries

Greetings as we begin a new program year for children and teens at CCA! The break in weekly Church School and Youth Group meetings over the summer opened up time for two summer events. The first was the Senior Youth Group's Mission Trip to North Carolina in

June. Our group of 15 teens and 6 adults spent the week working in communities that were impacted by Hurricane Helene. The second program was Vacation Bible School in August. The year was our biggest VBS yet, with 42 children, 21 youth volunteers, and 14 adults having a blast while learning Bible stories. The week ended with 37 "Birthday Bag" kits donated to the SHARE food pantry and a campfire/campout for families on Friday evening. Photos of the Mission Trip and Vacation Bible School will be on display after worship during the Rally Day picnic on September 7th.

Now that the summer adventures are over, it's time to settle into the routine of our school-year programs. September 7th will be our official kick-off with the start of Church School on Rally Day, followed by a picnic for all. The remaining youth programs will be starting throughout the month. See below for more details and contact Larissa Riley with any questions.

Church School begins on September 7th for all children in preschool through 7th grade. Registration forms are available on the church website and at church on Sunday mornings. We will have three classes this year:

Preschool* - Kindergarten: (*3 year olds welcome if potty-trained and ready to separate from their caregiver. We have a staffed nursery in the Vestry for children that aren't ready for Church School.)

Elementary School: (1st - 4th grade)

Middle School: (5th - 7th grade)

Junior Youth Group (JYG) provides opportunities for community building and service to our students in 5th - 7th grade. JYG will meet once each month on Sunday after worship. Our first meeting will be Sunday, September 21st.

Confirmation Class is open to all students in 8th - 12th grade. This class meets approximately twice per month from September - June to give students a chance to dig deeper into their own faith as well as learn what it means to be a member of our church and the United Church of Christ. Please let Larissa know if you have a teen that may be interested in participating in this year's Confirmation Class.

Senior Youth Group (SYG) is open to all teens in 8th - 12th grade. This group typically meets on Sunday evenings, and also participates in church and community events. One of our goals each year is to plan a summer Mission Trip to serve a community in need outside of our local area. Upcoming Youth Group meeting dates and times will be shared by email. Please reach out to Larissa if you would like to receive this information.

Who Sits in the Pews (and Online)? (a.k.a. "Know Your Neighbor")

We worship together. Some of us work in direct service to God, congregation or needs outside our church doors. Perhaps we enjoy a bit of fellowship. Maybe, simply, our warm smiles silently touch the hearts of those who need them most as we "pass the peace" each Sunday.

We are a community—a faith family—but how much do we truly understand each other's core? New members are introduced to the congregation. But typically those who have prayed together for decades are never re-introduced.

So, here's your chance to more fully embrace the sense of community that is the Congregational Church of Amherst.

Share and shine with us—tell us about yourself or your family. We'll publish periodic member spotlights in *The Spire* throughout the year...for as long as it takes!

Below are a few questions to get the ball rolling. Submit your responses to patty_cc@yahoo.com. Patty Jillson will contact you for clarification or additional insights.

- Individual or Family Surname(s):
- Individual First Name(s):
- Preferred Contact: (phone, email)
- How long have you been with the Congregational Church of Amherst? What brought you here?
- What roles do your faith and this community play in your life? How have they helped you?
- What do you like most about the CCA?
- Do you have a favorite CCA memory that you'd like to share? If so, please do.
- What else would you like to share? (Perhaps a life's motto or goal, a job or hobby, an obstacle overcome, a current struggle, a fun factoid?) What makes you "tick?"

Thank you for sharing!

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

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AMHERST, NH

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September 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1) 10:00 WA Workshop	2) 5:00 Church Council 7:00 Trustees of the Facility	3) 9:30 Staff Meeting	4) 4:00 Trustees of the Invested Funds 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	5)	6)
7) RALLY DAY 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship/Picnic	8) 10:00 WA Workshop	9) 10:00 WA Board 7:00 Diaconate	10) 11:00 Congregational Care 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	11)	12)	13)
14) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir	15) 10:00 WA Workshop	16) 7:00 Communications Team	17)	18) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	19)	20)
21) SHINE SUNDAY 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 Youth Choir 11:30 Junior Youth Group	22) 10:00 WA Workshop	23) 10:00 Caregivers Circle 4:00 WOW Team	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)				

