



VILLAGE SPIRE

December 2025

Advent Vespers Service

December 11 7:00 p.m.



Advent Vespers Service

Wednesday, December 10
7:00 p.m.

In the busy weeks that lead up to Christmas we can sometimes lose sight of “the reason for the season” of Advent. Advent is meant to be a peaceful time of anticipation and preparation, a time of joy and hope. Advent is also a time for those who aren’t feeling joyous to find a space for their uncertainty, apprehension, and grief. Advent gives us permission to honor the part of ourselves that is longing to slow down, to take a breath, to *be* instead of *do*. It also provides us an opportunity to find comfort in the darkness. Join us for a time of quiet prayer, reflective readings, candle lighting, and meditative music. Come experience Advent and take a break from the busyness of Christmas. Come as you are and just be.



Silent Night, Holy Night

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
December 2025

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. If you were to ask me what my most anticipated moment is in the entire Advent/Christmas season, it’s this: the moment when our sanctuary lights dim on Christmas Eve, as we pass the candlelight from one to another, and quietly begin to sing the opening verses of *Silent Night*.

As I look around the sanctuary, and see a multitude of tiny lights held aloft, softly illuminating the faces of each singer as the darkened sanctuary begins to glow, it takes my breath away each and every time. There is something truly magical about this moment. It’s the culmination of weeks upon weeks of preparation and busyness. Saturday fairs and Sunday concerts, Advent services and Christmas parties, spaghetti suppers and breakfasts with Santa. All of it has kept us whirling and scurrying to and fro, until every pie is baked, every gift is wrapped, every song is sung, every card is sent. For many of us, the whirling and scurrying will continue on Christmas Day, as food, family, and friends fill our list of things to do and places to go. But in that moment, on Christmas Eve, all-that-is-to-come is briefly set aside, as we pause, in the darkness, in the silence, in the space we’ve created to allow light and longing to break through.

Continued on page 3

The CCA Racial Justice Team Pursues Many Diversity Activities

Throughout the Fall, 2025, the **CCA Racial Justice Team (CCA-RJT)** has been enthusiastically involved in a variety of activities designed to foster personal growth and increase public understanding around antiracism. Team members include Sally Bowkett, Lee Bowley, Peter Cipparone, Stuart Coon, Joan Egbertson, Sheryl Gottwald, Linda Lannin, Gail Miller and Senior Pastor Maureen Frescott. From workshops to rallies, the **CCA Racial Justice Team** has explored how racism exists in, and impacts our own personal lives while also providing the greater church community with information about antiracism and opportunities to explore this topic in more depth.



Continued on page 8

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
Organist
michaelh117@gmail.com

Larissa Riley
Director of Youth Ministries
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Andrea Cyr
Church Office Administrator
andrea@ccamherst.org

Christmas Eve Services Wednesday, December 24 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.



Our **5:00 p.m. Family Service** is tailored for families with young children and for the young at heart. Come hear the Christmas story as told by our Youth Groups and Confirmands in our traditional Christmas Pageant. We'll raise our child-friendly glow stick "candles" as we sing *Silent Night* and *Joy to the World* together!

Our **8:00 p.m. Candlelight Service** tells the Christmas story through lessons and carols with music from our Bell and Chancel Choirs. As the sanctuary gradually fills with candlelight and the singing of *Silent Night*, we proclaim the birth of Jesus, the light of the world!

Both services will be livestreamed on Facebook and will be available on our website after 9:30 p.m.

Adult Confirmation: A Spiritual Journey Wednesday mornings and evenings on ZOOM

If you've ever been envious of our youth confirmands as they gather to ask and seek answers to the big questions of faith that many of us still have as adults, now is your opportunity to do the same! You're invited to join us on a year-long journey, or to come as you're able, as we explore the same topics that our youth confirmands wrestle with in their classes. The sessions are open to all, regardless of what faith tradition you were raised in (or not) or confirmed in (or not).

Sessions are held twice a month, on Wednesday mornings and evenings, on ZOOM. In December, both our morning and evening class will meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday. We'll resume our regular schedule of alternating weeks in January!

Email pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link.

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

(first date listed is a.m., second date listed is p.m.)

- 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



Silent Night, Holy Night, continued from page 1

This is my favorite moment because it's a reminder that this story we tell on Christmas Eve never grows old. Even in a world where faith seems to take a back seat in all our comings and goings, this is the one day, the one moment, that people feel drawn to experience every year in community. There is nostalgia at work here, no doubt, as familiar carols, twinkling lights, and ringing bells take us back to years gone by. There is an element of wanting to recreate an experience, an emotion, a moment that brings us back to a simpler time, a happier time, a more hopeful time. But there is also a leaning forward. A tug in our heart, in our spirit, that tells us that what we're seeking is found in the light. So every year we come to hear this story about light shining from a wandering star, light spilling out from a darkened stable, light squeezed into the wriggling form of an infant held in his mother's arms.

This moment is seconded only by the moment that follows. When the last verse of *Silent Night* is sung, after we call for the child to sleep in heavenly peace, the sanctuary lights are turned on and we hold our candles even higher still, as we sing, "Joy to the World," where heaven and nature sing, and we repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

Then comes what we pastors call the cascade of hundreds of handshakes, as we stand on the landing and greet all who came to experience these moments of light and joy. Face after face reflects the emotion of the experience and the anticipation of what is to come. Families, friends, visiting parents, college students home on break, new babies and growing grandchildren. Faces we see every week, faces we haven't seen since Easter or last Christmas, faces we've never seen before. "Have a merry Christmas" is wished over and over again as coats are buttoned, gloves and hats are donned, and all spill out into the cold December night, hopefully carrying the light we all longed to hold, inside.

This is my most anticipated moment, which culminates this season of anticipation - this season that we fill to the brim with baking and buying, singing and serving, partying and preparing. Advent is meant to be a time of slowing down, taking a breath, waiting for what's next, but in reality we often don't experience this slowing, breathing, waiting, until the sanctuary lights dim, the candle light is passed, and *Silent Night* is sung. It may only be a moment, but what a moment it is.

What is your most anticipated moment of this Advent/Christmas season? What is it that dances in your heart as you count down the days and look for the light? Whatever that moment is, my prayer is that each one of us moves through this season cherishing this time that we've been given. In these cold and darkened days of winter, we see lights all around us. We string them, hang them, ignite them, kindle them. To remind us of the light that we long to come, the light that always comes, on that silent night, holy night.

Peace and blessings to you all, on the advent of this season!

Pastor Maureen



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

"God with Us"

Our monthly Themed Worship returns on the third Sunday in December! 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.

In **December**, our children will begin the service by telling the traditional nativity story with their annual church school Christmas pageant. Then our children and youth will head off to church school, and we'll spend time reflecting on the waning days of Advent, as we anticipate God's liberating light coming into the world.

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

Christmas Fund/ Veterans of the Cross

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a unique special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that allows us to recognize and honor those who serve our beloved church. One of the special aspects of the Christmas Fund is that the funds do not support programs, make grants to institutions, or fund advocacy programs, but rather, they provide direct financial assistance to individual UCC clergy and lay employees. Thank you for your generosity and support.

Youth Ministries

Church School will meet the first three weeks in December. There will be NO CHURCH SCHOOL on December 28 due to school vacation.

The Junior Youth Group (grades 5 - 7) will have it's December Meeting on 12/21 after worship. Pack a lunch and we'll celebrate Christmas and decorate cookies together!

The Confirmation Class will have it's next meeting on 12/2.

The Senior Youth Group (grades 8 - 12) will be busy helping with the Lions Club Spaghetti Supper on 12/5 and Breakfast with Santa on 12/6. We will have Sunday evening meetings on 12/14 and 12/21. Details will be shared with teens and parents. Contact Larissa if you'd like to receive more information or join the Senior Youth Group.



We have two opportunities for children and teens to participate in pageants. Please contact Larissa for more information if your child would like to be part of a pageant.

Mini Pageant: Children in preschool - fourth grade are invited to participate in a short pageant during worship on 12/21 (before children leave for Church School).

Christmas Eve Family Service: Middle School and High School students are needed to be readers and costumed nativity characters during the 5 PM Service.

The Symbolism of Our Chrismon Tree

The Chrismon tree is a cherished tradition in many Christian churches, decorated with white and gold symbols that represent the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Originating in the mid-20th century, the Chrismon tree uses these ornaments—known as Chrismons—to proclaim the story of God's plan for salvation and to invite reflection on the Christian faith.

All Chrismons are crafted in white and gold, symbolizing the purity, perfection, majesty, and glory of the Son of God. Pearls represent the Word of God, while the tiny white lights adorning the tree signify Christ as the light of the world.

Key Symbols and Their Meanings

The Cross Represents our Lord's redeeming work for the salvation of humankind. Different forms of the cross highlight various aspects of Jesus' work.

Stars

- ◆ Five-pointed: The Epiphany
- ◆ Seven-pointed: The Gifts of the Spirit
- ◆ Eight-pointed: Holy Baptism

The Circle Symbolizes eternity, the eternal love of God, and eternal life in God's kingdom.

Daisy Represents the innocence of the Christ Child.

The Fish (IXOYC) An ancient Christian symbol. The Greek word for fish, "IXOYC," is an acronym for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

Greek Cross All arms are of equal length. This balanced form was widely used by early Greek Christians.

Rose Symbolizes the Nativity of Jesus, His human birth, and His mother, Mary.

Iota Chi (IX) The first two letters of the Greek name for *Jesus*.

The Triangle Represents the Triune God.

Shepherd's Crook with Alpha and Omega The Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, refer to the eternity of Christ. The shepherd's staff symbolizes Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and the cross is also depicted.

The Butterfly A symbol of resurrection and new life in Christ.

Latin Cross with Alpha and Omega The Latin Cross is the most widely used form in the church. Early Christians often combined the Alpha and Omega with the cross to declare Jesus' divinity.

Crown Represents Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.



Together, these symbols on the Chrismon tree invite us to reflect on the story of Jesus and the hope, love, and promise at the heart of the Christian faith.

The Church in the 1950's Part Two—Rev. Frank Weiskel

By Sue Spiess, Historian

When Rev. Frank Weiskel was called as minister in July 1954, a new era began. Amherst was beginning to awaken from its "long slumber," as describe in *Amherst, New Hampshire 1881/1982*. The Congregational Church awakening too - and quickly. The chapter entitled "Stretching" notes that Rev. Frank Weiskel "had a profound effect on the Church and its activity. A Navy Chaplain completing his tour of active duty, he began a short but very effective and meaningful pastorate."

The Report of the Board of Deacons in the 1954 Annual Report, written by Acting Chairman Creeley S. Buchanan, described, with his characteristic wry sense of humor, the impact that Frank Weiskel had on the Deacons upon his arrival.

As has apparently been the custom in this church for many years, the functions of the Deacons seem always to have been to serve Communion, attend the monthly church committee meetings, and otherwise do little except maintain as much dignity as possible.

This was the course being followed throughout the first half of the past year, or at least until the arrival on the scene of the Rev. Frank M. Weiskel, who changed all that, as he has changed many of the other behavior patterns within the church. Aside for the aforementioned functions, which incidentally the Deacons have performed regularly throughout the past year, there were few duties for the Deacons to perform as such in 1954, until August, at least!!

In his 1954 Minister's Report, Frank Weiskel detailed the changes that occurred in the first **six** months of his arrival. As Creeley Buchanan describes, the Board of Deacons were "revitalized." That was just the beginning! The Church Committee meeting schedule, the communion service, and the Order of Service were all changed. A different order for the Reception of New Members and information lectures for new members were added. A church study was established and furnished, a church office was set up with a mimeograph machine and an addressograph, a part-time church secretary was hired, alterations and improvements to the parsonage and church were made, and a church sign was added. A Couples Club was formed (which lasted until the 1980's), and the Woman's Association continued to be active.

The changes detailed above centered around the adult experience. The children, however, were also a very active part of the church. Children went to church with their parents, dressed in their "Sunday best" and mingled with their friends. In 1954, 150 children were enrolled. There was little competition for their attention on Sunday mornings. There were very few organized sports, and those that did exist certainly didn't schedule games or practice on Sundays! Stores were not open; neither was the movie theater in Milford. Across the Common was Mr. William's Variety Store, which was open, and some lucky children were allowed to visit after church to purchase penny candy.

Dorothy Davis became the Church Historian, and she amassed an amazing amount of information. Every church event, Sunday bulletin, and every notice of weddings, births, deaths, and activities of church members printed in the *Milford Cabinet* were carefully glued into large scrapbooks, some of which have been used in this column. The weekly schedule of church events, published in the newspaper, were also included.

Whew! As you can imagine, many of these changes required more funds. The Minister's Report notes that "financially, our congregation has started to wake up." 180 subscribers pledged \$11,730. As membership grew, demands for more space grew as well, particularly for the church school. Soon the meetinghouse would be bursting at the seams.

More change was on the horizon, and with it, came an inevitable bit of controversy. As described in the history book, *Amherst New Hampshire*, soon both the church and the community would transform from "Stretching" to "Stepping Out." Next month will continue with more details about the life of the church in the 1950's.

Friendship Baskets

With overwhelming generosity, our congregation collected \$2400 through the Friendship basket collection for local families in need. The diaconate was able to give gift cards to Walmart or Market Basket to 10 families and individuals to help bring more cheer to their Thanksgiving tables. Thank you to all.





Sue Spiess, Church History Sleuth and Chronicler

By Patty Jillson

Doug Topliffe tapped Sue Spiess to succeed Anne Krantz as church Historian three years ago. But time constraints borne of a book project's demands kept the now-published co-author of Home: A Sense of Place, a Sense of Belonging* from accepting the vacant position until earlier this year. Sue hit the ground running.

"What I'm going to focus on now is how the town grew, how the nation changed, and how that affected the church" in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, said Sue. "In the early 50s, the church was really sort of treading water. Then the population of the town grew and two ministers in succession really changed the activity and the direction of the church—and that's, to me, fascinating," she said.

Nearly a decade ago the New Hampshire Historical Society digitized and made available online CCA records dating from 1741 to 1957. Those records, donated to the NHHS in 2003, can be accessed through the society's online collections catalog. Anything younger is housed on site in a filing cabinet behind the church's organ or in the aptly yet understatedly named "Historian's Closet" upstairs on the third floor.

Sue—who holds bachelor and master degrees in English, married a

history major, and has always liked history herself—recalls being "astounded... overwhelmed might be a better word" the first time that she entered the history-steeped, deep-shelved closet. "I didn't know it was there," Sue said.

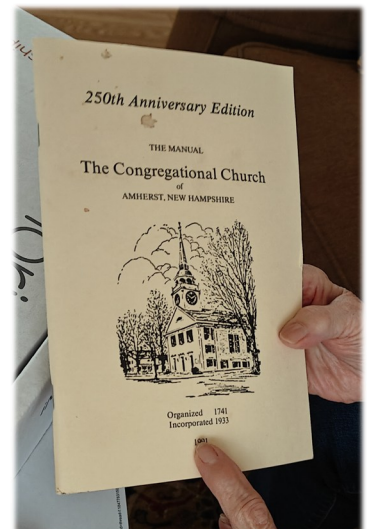
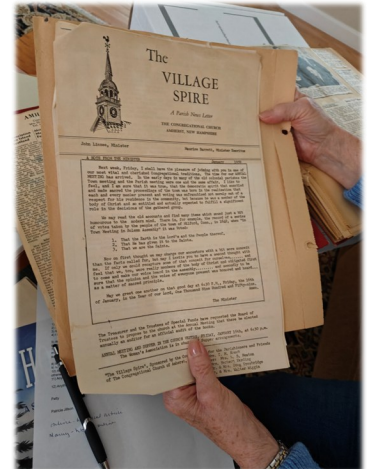
She hopes that one day the Historian's Closet can be made more accessible and that, perhaps, the church's historical records (many of which are Milford Cabinet clippings of school sporting events and other slice-of-life congregant stories—all meticulously affixed inside scrapbooks yet falling prey to the ravages of age and acidity) can eventually be digitized like earlier, more formal records.

According to the 250th Anniversary Edition of the Church Manual (1991 edition), said Sue, the annually elected church historian is charged with preparing and maintaining a chronological history of the church to be entered into the church's Annual Report. Additionally, however, the position currently includes a non-voting Church Council seat and monthly publication of historical essays in *The Village Spire*.

As for what new ideas Sue brings to the position, she said that she'd like her research and writings to record a whole-community perspective. "I'd like to focus somewhat on the actions of some specific people who really did change things, or who played a big part in the church," she said. "Because predecessors didn't have access to a lot of first-person accounts they had to focus on the history of what this minister did or what that minister did. I'd like to sort of talk more about the whole church," said Sue, who intends to draw from a strategy proven invaluable to her book research—talking to the now-grown generations who experienced the times that she seeks to record.

"I love the history of this church, both the building itself and the members of the congregation... Many people don't know the history, so I'm thinking that the 50s, the 60s, the 70s and the 80s might be new to some or many people. And I think that if we don't document that for a wider audience, that it will be lost. I would like to preserve and document the bits of information that are around so other people will have access to it later," Sue said.

*Sue Spiess and Peggy Silva, who both reside in Amherst, co-wrote Home: A Sense of Place, a Sense of Belonging (published June 5, 2025, by Barnes & Noble Press). The book is about life in 1950s and '60s Amherst, NH, as seen through the eyes of approximately 150 now-grown children who lived here then. Doug Topliffe was one of those children.



Who Sits in the Pews (or Online)? (a.k.a. “Know Your Neighbor”)

Rev. Shayna Appel—Just Say “Yes!”

Last month the Rev. Shayna Appel asked volunteers to collectively deep dive into the impetus behind their participation in the CCA—peeling back the layers of what they do, how they do it, and ultimately unearthing the “why” at its core. WSITP inadvertently gave Shayna a similar opportunity recently, as we explored what makes her tick!

“I think life is a little big to try to wrap up in any neat bows,” she responded initially, when asked her philosophy of life. (But she did share that her favorite scripture passage is “And it came to pass.”) Ultimately, however, she reflected that what truly drives her is “saying ‘yes’ to life.”

Saying “yes” has certainly led Shayna along an exciting path of twists and turns, all leading to ways that she could help other people. Self-expression and heavenly discernment have defined that trail.

“If I were to describe it in the language of faith, I would say at different points in my life God has said, ‘Hey, what would you think about trying this? I have use for you. I have need for you here. I think you might be good at this. Why don’t you try this?’ and I’ve said, ‘Yes.’”

Shayna’s foray into professional life began with firefighter-paramedic and critical incident stress management (what she calls “emotional CPR”) roles. But that 17-year path was probably more inspired by her childhood fascination with the 1970s TV show *Emergency!* than by a heavenly calling, she believes. Regardless, her experience—educational, professional, and personal—did provide knowledge and insight that enrich the support that she’s provided over the past several decades, as a fire department chaplain and as a death doula.

Like the proverbial phoenix rising from ashes, Shayna turned her own firefighter/paramedic burnout into a new beginning. After a short stint on ski patrol she pivoted and went back to school, this time for a master’s degree in marriage and family counselling that “would cost less than it would to pay a therapist to do the work.” She also performed on vocals and guitar, professionally, co-releasing a music video on homelessness that went national after it was picked up by the National Coalition for the Homeless.

It was after the recording release—with its serendipitous cover art depicting loaves and fishes—that Shayna felt a pull towards ministry service in the Unitarian Universalist Association.

“I chose a Christian seminary to overcome my fear of all things Christian, because having been raised Jewish one does have a certain, or may have a certain, fear of all things Christian. I went to this great liberal Christian school and fell in love with Rabbi Jesus,” said Shayna, who “jumped ship” and became ordained in the United Church of Christ but was later also ordained in the UUA.

“The thing I love about being in the UCC is that we have a common narrative, which is the scriptures. We don’t see them the same way...interpret them the same way. But at least there is a common narrative that we’re working from. [The UUA] at its best...brings together many different faith traditions, and what I am is a lover of faith traditions,” said Shayna.

“I am a lover of faith traditions...the commonalities and the things that are different about them—both are pretty rich,” said Shayna, who has worshipped in mosques, meditated with Buddhists, and even participated in First Nations sweat lodge ceremonies.

When not serving in a religious capacity, Shayna can typically be found on staff at Stepping Stones Farm in Temple, NH, where she helps provide equine-assisted body-mind-spirit educational opportunities to groups and individuals. That is, except for the winter months, when this snowbird heads south to pursue another of her passions—golf.

“If you say “yes” to life, it will take you places that, like, if you would have asked me 50 years ago where I thought I would be today I could not possibly have imagined this, and it is so much more! It has been so much richer...so much more gratifying...life-giving, than anything I could have dreamed up,” she said. “That, to me, is an indicator of the Divine.”



The CCA Racial Justice Team Pursues Many Diversity Activities, continued from page 1

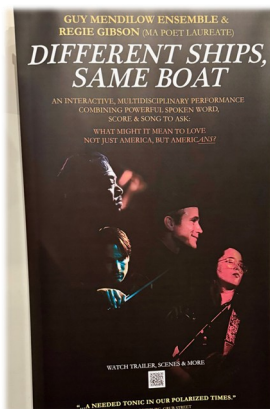
On September 14, 2025, **CCA-RJT** members attended the **Multicultural Festival** in Nashua, NH, sponsored by the *Nashua Cultural Connections*. A variety of foods from a multitude of cultures, music, art, and kids' activities filled this afternoon of fun.

Of special note were the beautiful costumes and expressive dances performed by dance companies representing cultures from around the world, such as the Bharatanatyam, an ancient classical dance from Southern India. This dance combined Bhava (*expression*), Raga (*melody*), and Tala (*rhythm*) to tell stories. The **Multicultural Festival** is an annual event usually held on a weekend in September and you may want to plan to attend some or all of this festival next year.

Thanks to funds from a special CCA grant, the **CCA-RJT** sponsored- and members attended a **Freedom Fund Dinner** supported by the *Greater Nashua Area Branch of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)* on October 17th, 2025. The topic of this annual dinner was, "*The Fierce Urgency of Now*". Speakers talked about the gravity of continuing the quest for equity, political rights and social inclusion for Black People and all persons of color. The Keynote Speaker was US Congresswoman Maggie Goodlander. Jordin Lopez, the Youth Speaker, spoke eloquently about her active involvement in the *Greater Nashua Area Branch of the NAACP*. The Dinner was an opportunity to express gratitude to the many members who actively pursued this crucial goal of fostering inclusion and equity, such as the new civil rights initiative instituted by the *NAACP* this past year. In partnership with the **Baseball Hall of Fame**, members of the *Greater Nashua Area Branch of the NAACP* piloted a classroom program for eighth-grade students, discussing issues of segregation, integration, and equity in the context of the all-American game of baseball.

A number of the **CCA Racial Justice Team** members attended the **No Kings Rally** at the Milford, NH, Oval on October 18th, 2025. Milford was just one of many towns nationwide sponsoring **No Kings Rallies** designed to protest against increasing authoritarianism and to stand up for the Constitution. This movement was a nonviolent effort to fight dictatorship, since our country's government is not absolute rule by one person, but a democracy where power is vested in the people. Approximately 1500 people attended the October 18th **No Kings Rally** in Milford while an estimated 7 million people attended **No Kings Rallies** across the United States on this date.

October 23rd brought several RJT members to the *Andre Institute of Art* in Brookline, NH, for a live and original multimedia presentation entitled, "**Different Ships, Same Boat**". Through fascinating scores, narration, memoir and poetry, as well as theater, the *Guy Mendilow Ensemble* explored the real-life choices people make in times of personal or societal change. Performers included Reggie Gibson, Literary Performer and Inaugural Poet Laureate of Massachusetts and Guy Mendilow a Composer and Story Teller. They told stories emanating from small town America, urban development, and ports of entry. Their music spanned lyrical American Blues to songs from older homes from which today's Americans came (*for example, Ottoman Jews from Greece and Hungary*). Through their stories and music, the *Guy Mendilow Ensemble* offered a stirring exploration of the joys, tensions, and complexities of who we are and who we want to be.



The CCA Racial Justice Team Pursues Many Diversity Activities, continued from page 8

The Wilkins Elementary School sponsored a Book Fair on October 28th, 2025 and the **CCA-RJT** was there! We purchased two children's books to place in the **CCA-Social Justice Library** for the enjoyment of the many families in our church community. ***Braided Roots*** by Pasha Westbrook and ***Before the Ships*** by Maisha Oso are now available to sign out, along with many other books for people of all ages. The Social Justice Library is located just before the stairs as you enter the church by the front door.

Several **CCA Racial Justice Team** members attended the **19th Annual Black New England Conference** on October 25th, 2025, focusing throughout the day on, "*State of the Union: A Critical Perspective on Black America 1776 to 2026*". Speakers reflected on 250 years of Black history in America and examined progress, and lack thereof, in the pursuit of equality for African Americans. The conference examined not only on the struggles and resilience of the past but envisioned what a future might look like as we move closer to '*... liberty and justice for all*'. Topic areas of focus included pressing challenges such as economic disparities, systemic racism in the criminal justice system, barriers to political engagement, and the critical importance of authentic representation in social media and culture. The keynote speakers were Lynae Vanee and Shannon LaNier, social media influencers who addressed questions about the media's role in Black storytelling.

CCA-RJT members meet on a monthly basis to share experiences around racism and antiracism, to discuss activities related to diversity that members have attended, and to plan activities for the greater community such as the *Frederick Douglass Reading* that occurs in June each year. We maintain and expand the **Social Justice Library**, provide weekly food for thought in the '**Did You Know**' excerpts included in the weekly bulletin, provide information in the '**News from the Pews**' about upcoming racial justice events that church members may wish to attend, and include a longer article related to racial justice in each of the '**Spire**' publications. The **CCA-RJT** maintains open communication with racial and social justice groups at other churches in our area. For example, members of our RJT attended a church service and fellowship at the Church of Our Savior following an invitation from their Racial Justice Team. We appreciate this opportunity to learn and grow as a community of folks invested in pursuing equity for all of God's people.

Submitted by The CCA-Racial Justice Team



SHARE Food Pantry

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

December Pantry Requests:

toothbrushes and toothpaste,
deodorants, shampoo and
conditioner, bar soap,
feminine hygiene products,
diapers and wipes

Donations may be left in our SHARE collection containers found in the narthex, the church office, and outside the community room. Donations may also be brought directly to the SHARE Center in Milford; if you are unsure where, please call their office at 673-9898.



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.





FAMILY
Christmas
CONCERT

SUNDAY
DECEMBER 14, 2025
4:00 PM

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sacred and Popular Christmas Songs
Choral and Instrumental Classics
Sing-A-Long Holiday Favorites

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ
11 CHURCH ST, AMHERST NH

SARA PHELPS, Music Director
CHANCEL CHOIR
HANDBELL CHOIR
YOUTH CHOIR
MICHAEL HAVAY, Piano/Organ
SUE WERST, Flute



December 2025

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|--|--------|---|
| | 1) 10:00 WA Christmas Luncheon | 2) 5:00 Church Council 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:00 Trustees of the Facility | 3) 10:00 Adult Confirmation 7:00 Adult Confirmation | 4) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir | 5) | 6) Breakfast with Santa  |
| 7) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Youth Choir 11:30 Racial Justice Team | 8) 10:00 WA Christmas Luncheon | 9) 10:00 WA Board 7:00 Communications Team 7:00 Diaconate | 10) 10:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Advent Vespers Service | 11) 10:00 Congregational Care 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir | 12) | 13) |
| 14) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Youth Choir 4:00 Christmas Concert 6:30 Senior Youth Group | 15) 10:00 WA Christmas Luncheon | 16) 10:00 Caregivers Circle | 17) 10:00 Adult Confirmation 5:30 Budget & Finance Team 7:00 Adult Confirmation | 18) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir | 19) | 20) |
| 21) SHINE SUNDAY 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Christian Ed 11:30 Youth Choir 11:30 Junior Youth Group 6:30 Senior Youth Group | 22) 10:00 WA Christmas Luncheon | 23) 4:00 WOW Team | 24) Christmas Eve 5:00 Family Service 8:00 Candlelight Service | 25) Merry Christmas  | 26) | 27) |
| 28) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship | 29) 10:00 WA Christmas Luncheon | 30) | 31) | | | |

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

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