



# VILLAGE SPIRE

March 2026



## Shine Sunday “Making Amends”

March 15, 10:00 a.m.

Our monthly themed worship returns on the third Sunday in January! 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.

On **March 15<sup>th</sup>** we'll hear the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who climbed a tree to get a better look at Jesus and wound up getting a better look at himself as well. The season of Lent inspires us to look inward, to clean house, to right the wrongs we've done, not just with our words but with our actions. We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!

## Living Lent

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor  
March 2026

On Ash Wednesday, forty of us gathered in our church sanctuary to sing, pray, receive communion, and contemplate our dustiness. The smudge of ash we lined up to receive has many meanings: it reminds us of our humble beginnings and our inevitable end; our connection to creation and the commonalities we share with one another; and it reminds us of our dual nature, as beings made up of earthly dust and star stuff, as broken yet beloved children of God. Forty people, forty dustings, forty Lenten journeys begun.

Forty is a serendipitous number to have on hand as we marked the beginning of the season of Lent by marking ourselves with ash. The Lenten journey is 40 days long, as it's intended to replicate Jesus' 40-day trek into the wilderness where he prepared himself to answer God's call. The number 40 appears quite a bit in our Bible. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights on Noah and his ark. Moses and his people wandered in the desert for 40 years. Jonah reluctantly told the city of Ninevah they had 40 days to seek God's forgiveness. In all these instances, 40 is not a literal number but instead is symbolic of a time of testing, temptation, or trial.

To willingly enter such a time does not appeal to many, which is likely why Lent ranks pretty low on the list of "Favorite Seasons of the Church Year." It lacks the joy of Christmas and Easter, the hopeful anticipation of Advent, the starlight and wonder of Epiphany, and the fiery inspiration of Pentecost. When it comes to marking the milestone moments of the Jesus story, we love to celebrate his birth and resurrection, yet his time of trial in

*Continued on page 3*

## Preparing for the Future—End of Life Planning

**Saturday, March 14, 2026**

**10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** in the Community Room



Have you ever thought, "I really should get my end-of-life stuff sorted..." and then promptly put it in the too-hard basket? Or realize you don't know where to start?

You are not alone. Plan on starting by attending this no-cost workshop to learn more about End-of-Life Planning from local professionals. An attorney, along with medical and funeral home representatives, will discuss documents and decisions, and assisting people in their time of need every day. You'll come away with information on where to begin, and in a way that feels calm, empowering and uplifting. Let's get it done, so you can focus on living!

For additional questions or inquiries contact the Rev. Charlotte Bell, [pastorcharlotte@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastorcharlotte@ccamherst.org) or leave a message to 603-3231 x14.



## 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.

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### 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



## Safety-Related Educational/ Training Opportunities

**All are welcome!**

If you are interested in participating in one or both opportunities, use this link to sign up: <https://www.ccamherst.org/safety/> or contact Andrea in the church office.

### ALICE Training Webinar

#### Alert Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate

This training webinar is presented via Zoom on Monday, **March 23** at 9:00 a.m. It is a 3-hour presentation meant to provide an overview of ALICE, an active shooter response training program delivered with a trauma-informed approach. It helps prepares people to survive the unimaginable and is used extensively by our school system to help keep students and teaching staff prepared.

Information with details on training and the Zoom link will be available soon.

### CPR / AED / First Aid Training

Led by staff from the Amherst Fire Department, this is an informational training program that is intended to provide participants with a general knowledge of the current practices and procedures associated with CPR, AED equipment usage, and general first aid. It will most likely be a mix of on-line training and a hands-on session on a Saturday morning. It is not a certification program.

Once we have a level of interest established, we will be able to schedule this program.



## Financial Summary

(as of January 31, 2026)

	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income	\$328,624	\$311,819	\$16,805
Expenses	\$307,122	\$306,678	\$ 444
Net Income	\$ 21,503	\$ 5,141	\$16,362

Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole dollar; as such, some columns may not appear to total correctly. We hope you are finding this information helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on the Finance Team: Ken Bell (Treasurer), Paul Spiess, Doug Topliffe, and Todd Whitney.

## **Living Lent**, continued from page 1

the wilderness, which ultimately prepared him for the journey to the cross, is one we'd prefer to fast-forward through or dip our toes in only briefly. We may give up something for the 40 days of Lent – snacking, shopping, social media scrolling – but that's about all we might do to simulate the time Jesus spent fighting his demons and collecting his courage.

Our lack of love for Lent may stem from feeling like we're living Lent all year round. We may feel like the world we wander in every day is a wilderness journey – full of anxious uncertainty, unexpected trials, niggling temptations, voices from within and without that tell us we're not good enough, or so good we deserve to rule the world. Most of us are fairly adept at carrying guilt, shame, and regrets, wherever we go, as we revisit past mistakes while continuing to make new mistakes in the present. As we're bombarded with all the brokenness in the world – the division, the suffering, the violence – we may also be immersed in a perpetual battle between feeling like we should be doing more to fix it, and feeling like there's little to nothing we can do at all.

If living Lent is something we do every day, why would we need to replicate Jesus' 40-day journey, before entering into the joy of Easter Sunday? Collectively, we come into our sanctuary every Sunday seeking joy, hope, inspiration, and comfort – we come seeking the good news that resurrection is possible – because wandering in the everyday wilderness is wearing us down. Why on earth would we want to spend our sanctuary time – our sabbath time – reflecting on sin and suffering and asking God to forgive us, for we know not what we do?

Thankfully, this not something we're expected to do. Lent is a season of 40 days, but it doesn't include the six Sundays that fall within it. Sunday is always a day set aside to celebrate the good news of the resurrection – the hope and joy we find in Jesus' triumph over death, showing us that love will always outlive, outlast, and overcome fear. The remaining 40 days – outside of Sundays – is the time we spend out in the world. Lent is an acknowledgment that we spend most of our time living in the wilderness. It also prompts us to look at what we fall back on in an effort to cope and survive. The practice of giving something up – a pleasure, a habit, a compulsion – is meant to serve as a prompt to shift our focus on to God; to fill the time we usually give over to our distractions and fill it with an awareness of God instead – the awareness that we're not alone in the wilderness. God is with us. Giving us strength, offering us comfort, bolstering our courage, as we wander in a world filled with uncertainty, trials, temptations, and voices from within and without that are not rooted in love.

Jesus' 40-day journey led to the cross, but it did not end there. He spent his wilderness time contemplating the difficulty of what God was calling him to do – to live as an example of love, to stand up for the disenfranchised and marginalized, to push back against injustice, and step forward while others shrank in fear. He also used his wilderness time to step away from distractions, to create more space for God flow into. So when he left his self-imposed 40-day wilderness, and walked into the wilderness of the everyday world, he knew he was not walking alone.

May we take some time in these 40 days of Lent to do the same. Celebrate the Sundays, and spend the rest of the season creating some space for God to flow in. So whenever we walk into the world, we'll know – truly know – that we are not alone.

Peace and blessings,  
*Pastor Maureen*

## **Proposed Bylaw Changes**

The Ad Hoc Bylaws Review Team shared at the Feb. 8, 2026 Preliminary Budget Informational Meeting that proposed changes to our church's current bylaws are ready for the congregation's review.

These proposed changes, which have been approved by Council, will be on the Annual Meeting agenda, scheduled for May 17, 2026 (after Sunday worship), and are available in the member's section of our church website: <https://www.ccamherst.org/proposed-bylaw-changes-for-may-2026/>. Anyone preferring a hardcopy, please contact Andrea Cyr at [andrea@ccamherst.org](mailto:andrea@ccamherst.org) or (603) 673-3231 ext. 0.

### **Two Informational Sessions**

have been scheduled to address any questions/inputs:

- Monday, March 16, 7:00 p.m. on Zoom, (contact Andrea Cyr in the church office for the Zoom link).
- Sunday, March 22, 11:30 a.m. in person in the parlor.

We look forward to seeing you at either/both of these sessions,

Ad Hoc Bylaws Review Team,  
*Steve Boczenowski*  
*Pastor Maureen Frescott*  
*Heather MacDonald*  
*Susan Manchester*  
*Doug Topliffe*  
*Sue Werst*



## Serving Neighbors Near and Far

Our church mission statement contains the phrase "Serving neighbors near and far." Following is a summary of our efforts to fulfill that mission for the period from May 2025 through January. Where relevant and available, website information is noted for those who would like to know more about the organizations to which we have made donations.

The **Homestarter Program** ([ccamherst.org/homestarter/](http://ccamherst.org/homestarter/)) continues to help newly housed individuals and families with donations of furniture and household goods. Many members of the congregation volunteer time, energy, compassion and muscle to coordinate donations and make deliveries to people in need.

The **Woman's Association** made donations to the following organizations:

- **\$500 to SHARE** Outreach ([sharenh.org](http://sharenh.org)) SHARE provides emergency and ongoing support to individuals and families in need in Milford, Amherst, Brookline and Mont Vernon.
- **\$500 to Holiday Toy Store** - assisting families in need by providing children with holiday gifts.
- **\$100 to Amherst Jr. Women's Club** ([ajwcnh.org](http://ajwcnh.org)) holiday baskets
- **\$750 to NH Food Bank** ([nhfoodbank.org](http://nhfoodbank.org)) The New Hampshire Food Bank provides food and resources to people in need statewide.
- **\$300 to Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter** ([nsks.org](http://nsks.org)), providing food and shelter to individuals and families struggling with food insecurity and homelessness.
- **\$200 to Animal Rescue League** ([rescueleague.org](http://rescueleague.org)) helps more than 2,000 pets each year, providing shelter, pet food assistance to families and adoption services to prospective pet owners.
- **\$350 to Bridges** ([bridgesnh.org](http://bridgesnh.org)) Bridges helps victims and survivors of domestic & sexual violence.
- **\$350 to Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative** ([souheganvalleyrides.org](http://souheganvalleyrides.org)) SVTC provides curb-to-curb, "dial-a-ride" type bus service available to residents of Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Milford, Mont Vernon and Wilton.

Through the Mission Fund, the World Service Committee recommended, and Church Council approved the following donations:

- **\$1,000 to End 68 Hours of Hunger** ([end68hoursofhunger.org](http://end68hoursofhunger.org)), providing weekend meals for children living in food-insecure homes.
- **\$1,000 to World Central Kitchen** ([wck.org](http://wck.org)), providing meals in response to humanitarian, climate and community crises.
- **\$2,500 to NH UCC Immigrant & Refugee Support Group** ([nhcucc.org/mission-groups/immigrant-refugee-support](http://nhcucc.org/mission-groups/immigrant-refugee-support))
- **\$1,500 to New Hampshire Food Bank** ([nhfoodbank.org](http://nhfoodbank.org)), fighting food insecurity in New Hampshire.
- **\$500 to Holy Joe's Café** ([holyjoes.org](http://holyjoes.org)), providing free coffee to US military bases around the world
- **\$1,000 to UCC Disaster Ministries** ([UCC.org](http://UCC.org))
- **\$3,000** of our annual \$4,000 contribution to **SHARE** ([sharenh.org](http://sharenh.org)), providing emergency and ongoing support to individuals and families in the Milford, NH area
- **\$2,000** to support the **Senior Youth Group** service trip to Savannah, Georgia.
- **\$2,500 to HomeStarter** for storage costs, which will become the church's annual monetary support for the program. A one-time grant of **\$1,000** was given to cover the start-up fees for an additional storage unit.

In December, the congregation provided Christmas gifts for the children of **Family Promise** ([familypromisesnh.org](http://familypromisesnh.org)) in Nashua and to residents at **Crestwood Center** in Milford.

The **Senior Youth Group** completed a week-long service trip to help repair storm damage in **Asheville, NC**. The group also organized the church's participation in Amherst **Halloween** activities, helped with the **Lion's Club** spaghetti supper, and assisted with **Breakfast with Santa**.

A culminating activity of this year's **Vacation Bible School** was the donation of 37 birthday bags (everything needed for a birthday: cake, frosting, candles, etc) to **SHARE**. It proved to be such a wonder-filled activity that the **Junior Youth Group** followed up with 40 additional bags in the fall. Reports were that each donation of bags lasted less than a month on **SHARE's** shelves.

Continuing a years-long tradition, **Church School** middle schoolers provided a soup and sandwich luncheon and visit to residents of the **Mill at Milford** ([aplaceformom.com](http://aplaceformom.com)).

Our outreach attempts to address many persistent needs in the world, and we do far more as a faith community than we could as individuals. If you have projects, events or donations you would like included in future updates, please contact Mark Baddeley in person or via email at [mbaddeley@comcast.net](mailto:mbaddeley@comcast.net)

## March Youth Ministries

**Church School (preschool - 7<sup>th</sup> grade):** We will meet every Sunday in March during the second part of the worship service. New children are welcome in church school at any time during the year. Registration forms are available in the narthex.

### Confirmation Class:

March 3 - Meeting at Hollis Church  
March 17 - Meeting at CCA

### Junior Youth Group (grades 5-7)

meeting March 22 after worship.

### Senior Youth Group (grades 8-12):

March 1 - 6:30 p.m. meeting  
March 15 - 6:30 p.m. meeting  
March 21 - Spaghetti Supper!  
March 29 - Teens reading during morning worship

## YOUTH MINISTRIES



### 144 Envelopes Fundraiser

Thank you to everyone that has supported the mission trip already! We only have 60 of the 144 donation envelopes left on our bulletin board in the community room. Come check it out during coffee hour after worship. It's easy to participate: just choose a numbered envelope and make a donation in that amount. No donation is too small. Can't make it to coffee hour on Sunday? No problem, pick any amount and make a donation [online](#).

### The SYG Spaghetti Supper and Variety Show

**Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m.**

All are invited to join the teens of our Senior Youth Group for an evening of dinner and entertainment for the whole family! Proceeds will support the 2026 SYG Mission Trip to Savannah, GA.

*Entertainers of all ages are needed (music, comedy, magic, skits, unique talents, etc.)!* Contact Larissa Riley by March 15 to be part of the show.



### Sign up for Vacation Bible School

This summer, we'll be going back in time to *Hometown Nazareth: Where Jesus was a kid!* Each day will begin with a new Bible story, followed by games, crafts, science, snacks, music and more. Children will have a blast and make new friends while learning about Jesus's life.

VBS will be held August 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to noon daily. Preschoolers - rising 5<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to be campers. Cost is \$30\* per child (\*financial assistance is available, contact Larissa Riley).

Middle school and high school students can participate as Youth Volunteers (no charge).

For more details, see our website or contact Larissa Riley or Gretchen Davis. Registration opens March 1<sup>st</sup> online: [www.ccamherst.org/vbsreg](http://www.ccamherst.org/vbsreg)



## One Great Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.

Please consider giving to One Great Hour of Sharing. There are several ways to donate:

- 1) One Great Hour of Sharing envelopes are in the pews for your convenience.
- 2) **Donate Online** through our church website, select the 'Missions' offering and type OGHS in the memo box)
- 3) Send a check to the office; make your check payable to *The Congregational Church of Amherst*, with OGHS on the memo line of your check.

**THANK YOU!**

## The Church in the Early Sixties— Rev. Dr. Paul Trudinger

By Sue Spiess, Historian

When Rev. Frank Weiskel resigned in September 1958, he left an active, growing congregation that had undergone significant changes during his four-year pastorate. A period of uncertainty, surprise, and waiting began, as Interim Pastor Thomas Billings served for two months and Rev. John Linzee was called and served until August 1959.

September 1959 brought great news and renewed enthusiasm when Burton Knight, Chairman of the Pulpit Supply Committee, announced they unanimously recommended the Rev. Paul Trudinger be called. An Australian, he came to the United States on a student visa. In his four years here, he would earn a Masters in Sacred Theology at Andover Newton, and after carrying a full load of studies at Boston University, obtain his Ph.D. in Biblical Studies. An accomplished musician, he also held Master's degrees in Arts, Education, Theology, and Music.

Paul Trudinger (in all annual reports, he is referred to as "Paul," not Rev.) had his work cut out for him. At 29, he was the sole pastor (it wasn't until 1983 that we had an Associate Pastor), was advisor to the Pilgrim Fellowship, responsible for all visitations to the ill and elderly, attended committee meetings, wrote (sometimes long!) sermons, attended wider church meetings, all while studying in Boston and writing his doctoral thesis. He and his wife Kathleen welcomed two sons into this busy life during his four years here.

With the help and support of many, the church grew under Paul's tenure. Church attendance increased from 277 in 1959 to 470 in 1963. Budget shortfalls decreased (yes, there are always budget shortfalls). 200+ students were enrolled in Church School.

Sparked by his love of music, in 1961 Paul discovered a rare 1871 Johnson Tracker Organ. With the help of others, he led in its purchase and rebuilding. It remains in place today. For its dedication in 1963, he wrote the hymn "Amherst, Our God We Gather in Thy Name," found in the back cover of our hymnals.

He related to children and teenagers alike. Known as "Uncle Paul" to some, he was young, married, and had two young children born in Amherst. An advisor to the Pilgrim Youth Fellowships, he was known to join the youngsters in pick up football games on the common. Attendance in the PYF soared.

The Youth and Senior Choirs were lively groups. Irene Willis, a highly skilled organist who commuted from Boston, was a "young, fun-loving choir director" of 20+ pupils. Mrs. Willis directed the choir and played the organ accompaniment simultaneously - no mean feat!

It was noted that the children's choir was probably much more well-mannered than the adult choir. One choir member would often softly whistle the upcoming hymn during the minister's prayer to the great amusement of the teenage sopranos in front of the tenors.

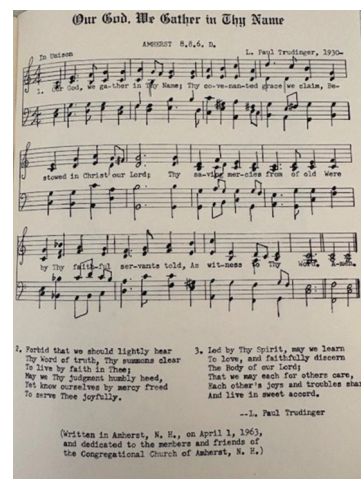
If Sunday presented a beautiful, blue sky in winter, one might see a pair of ski boots worn under the choir robes. Back then, boots were the lace up style and not as clunky as now. This footwear would "facilitate a quick exodus directly to the Christian Hill ski hill after church." Sometimes a few would even duck out after the anthem and before the sermon.

In the 1963 Annual Report, Music Committee chair Joseph Perkins summarized Paul's contributions to the life of the Congregational Church this way: "While much has been said and written about Dr. Trudinger's contribution to the musical life of our Church, we are convinced that mere words will never tell the whole story of his leadership and inspiration which placed new dimensions on this aspect of our worship service."

Upon completing his studies, Paul and his family returned to Australia to embark on new adventures. Publisher of 12 books and more than 100 articles on biblical studies, he was a professor at the University of Winnipeg, Ontario, Canada for 19 years. He returned to his native Australia and died in 2023.

The Congregational Church would again begin a search for a new pastor. There would be four interim pastorates before a settled pastor was called in September 1966.

Note: Information gathered from Annual Reports, scrapbooks compiled by Historian Dorothy Davis, and from *Home: A Sense of Place, A Sense of Belonging*.



## 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. Our morning class meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Our evening class will meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Email [pastormaureen@ccamherst.org](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org) to receive the Zoom link.

### UPCOMING SCHEDULE

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



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



## Holy Week

### Palm/Passion Sunday: March 29 - 10:00 a.m.

We begin with the traditional waving of the palms and end with a presentation of the Passion story.

### Maundy Thursday: April 2 - 7:00 p.m.

A prayerful reflective service with Communion and Tenebrae - a commemoration of Jesus' last night with his disciples.

### Easter Sunday: April 5

**7:00 a.m.** Sunrise Service on the Amherst village green. Celebrate the Resurrection at daybreak followed by coffee and donuts on the green.

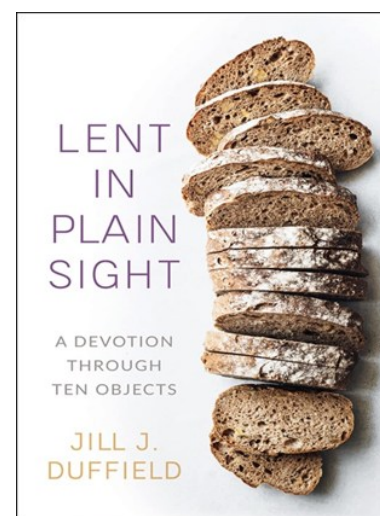
**10:00 a.m.** Easter celebration service in our sanctuary with our Chancel and Bell Choirs. Join us as we praise God with a joyful noise!

## Book Nook



### Monthly Book Recommendation

God is often at work through the ordinary: ordinary people, ordinary objects, ordinary grace. It is through the mundane that we hear God's quiet voice. In this devotion for the season of Lent, Jill J. Duffield draws readers attention to ten ordinary objects that Jesus would have encountered on his way to Jerusalem: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones. In each object, readers will find meaning in the biblical account of Jesus' final days. Each week, readers encounter a new object to consider through Scripture, prayer, and reflection. From Ash Wednesday to Easter, *Lent in Plain Sight* reminds us to open ourselves to God's still small voice.



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

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