



VILLAGE SPIRE

April 2026



Holy Week

Maunder 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!

Thank You!

The Senior Youth Group would like to extend a BIG "THANKS" to all members and friends of CCA who attended and participated in the SYG Spaghetti Supper & Variety Show last month!

Third Places

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor
April 2026

Here's a question to ponder: outside of your home and your workplace (for the not yet retired), are there any other places where you regularly gather with people who may be very different than you? A place where you interact with people who have different interests, backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, worldviews, or beliefs, with the goal of fostering community, connection, and relationship building?

In 1989, sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term "third place" to refer to public spaces where people gather outside of the two places we most often frequent: home and work. These spaces—such as libraries, cafes, parks, and recreational facilities—are accessible, welcoming hubs for regular, informal interaction.

You may belong to a community organization that offers a "third place" experience – Scouts, Lions, a garden or hiking club, even a condo association (though attached to "home") offer opportunities to create community with those who may be different than you. What makes these latter communal gatherings different than a park, café, or library, is the shared interests and goals that bring people together. You're more likely to interact or connect with someone when you're participating in an activity or organization that's drawn you together, rather than just sharing a public space together.

Participating in a church community also brings one into the "third place" realm, with an added incentive to navigate the common barriers to connection. Our faith tradition encourages us to practice patience, kindness, and compassion in our interactions; to offer mercy, forgiveness, and understanding when we're wronged; to open our hearts in love rather than give in to the fear that causes us to "other" those who are different than us.

While we lean on all of the above in our homelife and in the workplace out of necessity, increasingly the third places we seek out are intentionally devoid of such challenges. We gravitate towards communities where shared identities, interests, beliefs, and generational experiences smooth out the rougher edges we experience in more diverse communities. Understandably so. With so much division in the world it's nice to have a space where we're less likely to encounter points of conflict. A space where we can be ourselves, let our hair down, and bemoan the state of the world with those who are likely to agree with our assessment of the causes and the solutions.

Continued on page 3

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

The Good Stuff Sale is Coming!

Spring is coming, and so is the WA Good Stuff Sale! This event will be held in the Community Room and the Vestry on Friday, May 1st from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, May 2nd from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The sale will feature clothing, jewelry, handbags and linens, along with all kinds of household goods, plus toys, puzzles and games. Please put the dates on your calendar and spread the word about this always-popular event.

The WA is still accepting donations of the items included in the sale which can be dropped off in the designated area in the Vestry on Sunday or Monday mornings, or by arrangement with Sally Bowkett (sbb46@hotmail.com or 603-673-7409). Clothing should be clean and in good condition. Please sort items and label clothing bags to indicate whether they contain items for men, women, teens or children, linens, etc.



Other items you can donate include fine, costume and fun jewelry, good handbags, backpacks, shoes, boots etc. and accessories. Household items to donate include linens, sheets, towels, bedspreads, curtains, drapes, home decorative items, kitchen pots and pans, utensils, dishes, glassware, small working appliances, small furniture, lamps, toys, games, and puzzles.

Items that are **not** accepted include bicycles, large sports equipment, big furniture, computers, TVs, car seats or baby furniture - also **no** books this year.

Volunteers will be needed the week preceding the sale to help with set-up and on the days of the sale. Help will also be needed on Saturday, May 2nd at noon to bag up unsold clothes and take them to the Ecosmith container at the Meeting Place and to load non-clothing items into cars or trucks and drive them to Savers in Nashua.

If you have any questions about donations for the sale or assisting with the sale, please contact Sally Bowkett at 603-673-7409 or Alicia Wight at 603-345-0155.

All proceeds from the sale go to local charities and to meet needs within our church.



Financial Summary

(as of February 28, 2026)

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Difference
Income	\$350,511	\$344,113	\$6,398
Expenses	\$344,129	\$343,121	\$1,008
Net Income	\$ 6,382	\$ 993	\$5,389

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.

Third Places, continued from page 1

The issue that arises with these more homogeneous spaces is that it becomes even easier to “other” those not like us. It becomes easier to see them as one-dimensional people, characterized by the beliefs or labels we assign to them, with those beliefs and labels determined by whatever filter we’ve applied. The news sources we’re exposed to, the subjective opinions within our own group, the stream of biased or blatantly untrue portraits of those across the divide that we accept as either gospel truth or close enough to the mark to justify our judgment.

This is the hidden power of third places. When we interact with and work alongside those unlike us - those we’ve othered or dehumanized or even demonized in the close company of those like us - something unexpected happens. The labels begin to fall away. The caricatures and one-dimensional understandings are challenged. The enemy becomes a friend. We may still whole-heartedly disagree with their beliefs, worldview, or political stances. But when we stand alongside them serving up meals at a community supper, or hear them speak passionately about what it is they value, or see them in action as a coach, scout leader, teacher, or community organizer, then we begin to see that they are decidedly unlike the uncaring, uneducated, unenlightened enemy we may have previously believed them to be.

When we serve, volunteer, and worship alongside those not like us, we also have an opportunity to hear their story. And perhaps gain an understanding of how their past experiences, present joys, and future worries have shaped who they are. In the same way our own past, present, and projected future have shaped us.

Yes, it would be wonderful if our civic organizations, service groups, and faith communities could all be on the same page and march easily towards the common goals that we all propose to have. But this is far removed from our human experience. If we value diversity in community then inevitably we are invited to embrace the challenges that come along with it. And perhaps we may begin to see these challenges as a blessing. Homogeny in anything is rarely healthy. Human beings in particular can easily go off the rails or go too far down the wrong track when driven by a unified belief that is unchecked by dissenting voices. We can easily miss the mines and malevolent forces that a single worldview may blind us to. Which is why it’s good to have someone along for the ride who sees the signposts that we may have missed, or even throws on the brakes when we’re driven to move forward, as frustrating as that may be.

Ultimately, we worship a Creator God who invites us into relationship. While we may have our eyes on the destination, it’s the journey that we’re meant to savor. How we live together, how we love together, is the invitation of Christian discipleship. And every day, every interaction presents an opportunity to step into that third place and create anew.

Happy Easter!

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Maureen



Shine Sunday “Breakfast on the Beach”

April 19th 10:00 a.m.

Our monthly themed worship returns on the third Sunday in April! 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 April 19th we'll gather with the disciples on a beach in Galilee. There they encounter the risen Jesus, who coaxes them out of their post-resurrection funk by frying up some fish and issuing yet another invitation to “Follow me.” This will also be “Faith Promise Sunday” - as we celebrate the many ways we give back to God by supporting the ministries of our church. We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!



The Pouliots Share a Documentary About the Hannah Dustin Story with the Congregational Church of Amherst

With a buffalo hide hand drum and sweetgrass rattle, Denise and Paul Pouliot opened the second hour on February 15, 2026 with a prayer to the homeland, our ancestors, and the Creator. This music and these words focused on their spiritual connection to the land and to their Indigenous ancestors. What followed was an informative and heart-touching documentary about the times around which Hannah Dustin's story evolved, titled "*Retracing Footsteps: Hannah Dustin and the Abenaki.*"

In this documentary viewers learned about what occurred historically around the time of Hannah Dustin's kidnapping. The Abenaki clans had joined the French in France's desire to conquer more land in the New World. One such Abenaki tribe attacked the settlement in Haverhill, MA, where Hannah and her family lived. Hannah's husband ran off to save his 7 children while Hannah, her newly delivered infant, and a friend were kidnapped by the Abenaki tribe.

Hannah's infant died somewhere along the way while Hannah and her friend were eventually handed over to an Abenaki family, including 7 children. The captives were not tied up or held in restraints. The Pouliots shared that it was not unusual for English captives to be awarded to an Indigenous family. Sometimes captives chose to stay with their Native American family. Life with the Indigenous family was sometimes easier, especially for women. In the Abenaki tradition, women were central to the group, respected and autonomous. Colonial women, on the other hand, were viewed through a strict patriarchal and religious lens, denying them property ownership and independent legal standing and considering them inferior to men.

Mr. Pouliot shared that Hannah actually knew the male Abenaki native who held them captive; he and Hannah lived close by in a previous settlement. It is not clear why Hannah and her friend decided to kill and then scalp the entire family. Mrs. Pouliot noted that perhaps Hannah, having just delivered her eighth child, had experienced post-partum depression, making it more difficult for her to think clearly. It might also be that Hannah was experiencing significant grief at the loss of her infant, or perhaps she was motivated by the monetary reward she would receive. The documentary suggested that we may never know why Hannah and her friend committed such a grievous act. But it allows us to remember the atrocities experienced by the Abenaki clan as European settlers invaded and overtook their lands under the guise of manifest destiny.

This second-hour presentation was organized by the Congregational Church of Amherst Racial Justice Team. Thirty-seven audience members listened to the documentary and then joined the speakers for refreshments and further discussion in the Parlor. Paul Pouliot (*Sag8mo*) is the Head Male Speaker and Chief of the Cowasuck Band of the Penacook-Abenaki People. His wife and partner, Denise Pouliot (*Sag8moskwa*) is the Principal Female Speaker for the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People. Denise and Paul work tirelessly to advocate for Indigenous People. They seek truth and knowledge, and seek to abolish false narratives about the treatment of Native Americans over the last 5 centuries. For more information about indigenous people, current and past, please visit IndigenousNH.com

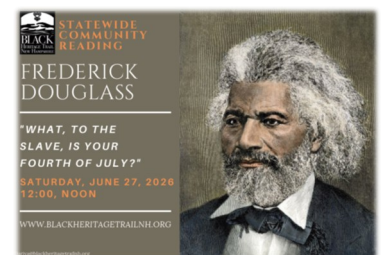
Submitted by: The CCA Racial Justice Team



Calling All Readers!

The Congregational Church of Amherst and the CCA Racial Justice Team will once again sponsor a reading of Frederick Douglass' moving speech, "**What, To the Slave, Is Your Fourth of July?**". The reading will take place in the CCA sanctuary at noontime on June 27, 2026. If you would like to participate in this stirring and poignant reading, please contact Gail Miller at: five0vnine@yahoo.com.

Submitted by The CCA Racial Justice Team



Adult Confirmation: A Spiritual Journey

Wednesday mornings and evenings on ZOOM

You're invited to join us on a year-long journey, or to come as you're able, as we explore the same big questions of faith that our youth confirmands wrestle with in their Confirmation classes. Sessions are held twice a month, on Wednesday mornings and evenings on ZOOM.

Our morning class meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, from 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Our evening class will meet the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

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



UPCOMING SCHEDULE

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

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

New Member Info Sessions

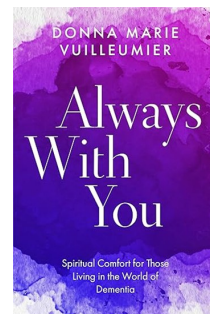
Are you NEW (or not-so-new) to our church and interested in learning more about our congregation? Are you interested in learning more about becoming a member? Do you want to know more about the United Church of Christ? If so, please join us for one of our INFO SESSIONS on either Wednesday, April 15 or Thursday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m. to learn more about all of the above! The sessions will be held on ZOOM to make it easier for all to attend.

For those who've already joined our mailing list and/or inquired about becoming a member, you'll be hearing from us soon! If you've joined us for our in-person or online worship over the last year and are interested in attending one of our info sessions, please reach out to Andrea in our church office at andrea@ccamherst.org or contact Pastor Maureen at pastormaureen@ccamherst.org.

Book Nook

Monthly Book Recommendation

Connecting to someone who lives with dementia/Alzheimer's can be difficult and heartbreaking. As cognitive functions decline, it can appear as though their personality is disappearing behind a veil.



Donna Vuilleumier, a UCC pastor and hospice chaplain serving here in NH, offers the essential reminder that a person's identity and spirit do not stop existing with the onset of dementia/Alzheimer's. Even when the person forgets who they are, the essence of their deepest self remains. Their humanity still bears the image of God.

With compassion, *Always With You* provides insight and practical tips to support the spiritual well-being of those living with dementia, and their caregivers.

Youth Ministries

Church School (preschool - 7th grade): There are a few Sundays in April without Church School due to Easter and School Vacation. On Sundays without Church School, children are encouraged to attend worship with their families. The Nursery will be staffed for children of any age that need a break from the service.

4/5: *Easter Sunday* (No Church School)

4/12: Church School

4/19: Church School

4/26: *Start of School Vacation* (No Church School)

Confirmation Class:

4/7: Meeting (Amherst)

4/10: Faith Visit to Temple Beth Abraham

4/21: Meeting with Mentors (Amherst)

Junior Youth Group (grades 5-7):

4/19: Meeting after Worship

Senior Youth Group (grades 8-12):

4/12: 6:30 PM Meeting



1963-1964: Years of Transition

Sue Spiess, Historian

The late 1950's and early 1960's were years of growth, excitement about the future, and seemingly endless possibilities. Our nation had transitioned from the aftermath of World War 11 and the Korean War, and had elected a new, young President in 1960. The Congregational Church had grown both in numbers and physical space and had two pastors, Rev. Frank Weiskel and Rev. Paul Trudinger, who led us in new directions.

When Rev. Paul Trudinger returned to his native Australia in April 1963, the church hired an interim pastor, Dr. David Willis. The husband of Irene Willis, the former and well-loved organist, he would serve for four months until September. In his Annual Report for 1963, he recognized the changes the church faced:

1963 was pre-eminently a year of transition: it saw a change of presidents, popes, stances on disarmament, and governments. The Congregational Church of Amherst was no exception. It experienced changes of (Church School) curriculum, ministry of music, and pastor.

Dr. Willis served as Interim Pastor from May until September 1, when Rev. Richard Beyer became the Interim Pastor until December 31, 1963. Despite having three pastors in one year, the church continued to be busy; Church School was well attended, the Couples Club flourished, outreach funds included in the budget, the Woman's Association remodeled the kitchen, and the choirs contributed greatly to the weekly service. And yes, there were always the perennial budget shortfalls.

Yet, when Rev. Walter Kraft began his pastorate in January 1964, he saw a church in need of a new direction. His Minister's Report at the end of 1964 minces few words.

The relationship of our Church to the other institutions of the community is negative, isolationist. The church is not itself a spiritual community concerned about the life of every last person in its parish, but largely a service conducted at 11 o'clock for those who are made welcome or who feel inclined to come. In both instances, we seem to be afraid of 'community.'

After including several items that need repair or consideration, he closed with these thoughts.

What about the 11 o'clock hour in this car-driving, amusement-centered New Hampshire with its totally secularized Sundays?

How can we have influence in a society dominated by advertisements, pamphlets, and propaganda?

Do we have such a concern for youth that we create a facility for them and which might be to them what...athletics is to schools, something interesting and exciting?

Does this Church have any program or facility for Senior Citizens, and if not, why and what?

What are we doing that might create the feeling of a community within the Church and might that community support and assist our families?

The New England and Village Green, of which we have a fine physical example, was an integrated way of life. What has been lost and what should be done to revitalize it?

It has been said that the Church is the only organization that exists solely for others. The question then is, even deeper, "Are we a Church?"

Rev. Kraft wrote these words more than 60 years ago, but they are strangely prescient today. We still ask the same questions and struggle with the answers. During the ensuing six decades, the church endured many challenges, but here we are now: a vibrant, growing body of believers still asking questions and still searching for solutions. As Historian Dorothy Davis believed in 1964, "we are starting to realize our potential." As your current historian in 2026, I believe we have widened our welcome, embraced the larger community, and continue to ask the hard questions. I hope that Rev. Kraft would agree that "We **are** a Church."

SHARE Food Pantry

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

April Pantry Requests:



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

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. Many thanks for your continuing support!

Many thanks for your continuing support!

Opening Work Weekend at Horton Center May 15 - 17, 2026

Do you have an interest in helping a summer camp get ready for the summer? If so, then Horton Center at Pine Mountain in Gorham, NH can use your help this May. The weekend of May 15-17, Horton Center will be having Opening Work Weekend, in which they will need all kinds of work and skill levels to help get the camp ready for the summer. This is for youth ages 16 and older and for adults who want to help. They are especially in need of help if you have a particular skill like carpentry, or are a licensed plumber, or licensed electrician. However, all work and skill levels are needed and appreciated. You can help for a few hours or for the weekend.

Horton Center is the summer camp of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ. It is a special place where youth and adults can connect with God, with nature, and with themselves in a supportive and inclusive environment. Last year, they hosted 318 campers! It takes a lot of work to get the camp ready for a season of campers and retreats.

If you are interested in helping on Opening Work Weekend, check out the Horton Center website at www.hortoncenter.org for more information on how to register for it.



Milford Rotary's 100 Holes of Golf



Raffle Tickets

- 10 cash prizes range from \$500–\$5,000. **Yes, you could win \$5,000!**
- Ticket price is \$20, and \$10 comes straight back to the church.
- **Drawing Friday, June 19, 2026**— you do not need to be in attendance to win.
- Bonus: each ticket comes with great local coupons, including Giorgios, Aroma Joes, and more.

Each year this event raises considerable funds that are distributed to local, regional and international community and non-profit organizations, and are used to provide \$30,000 in scholarships to area students.

Raffle tickets are on sale now, and can be purchased by following this link: <https://golf100holes.com/product/raffle-ticket?ref=59>. This link is specific to our church and we will receive direct credit from all tickets purchased through this link.

The drawing will be Friday, June 19, 2026 during the 100 Holes of Golf event, and you do not need to be present to win.

Committing Together for the Year Ahead

This year's Stewardship pledge campaign is ongoing. A huge THANK YOU if you have already made your pledge for the '26-'27 church year. We are truly grateful for your on-going support. If you have not yet pledged, we are asking you to prayerfully consider making your pledge to the church.

Pledging is easy and only takes a moment:

- Contact Andrea Cyr in the church office by [email](#) or telephone.
- Use the stewardship pledge form by clicking the link below, or by going directly to the church's website: <https://www.ccamherst.org/stewardship/>
- Use a pledge card; they're found in the pews, in the church office, on the table in the narthex... You can place your pledge in the offering plate, or leave it/mail it to Andrea in the church office.



FAITH PROMISE SUNDAY IS APRIL 19

We would love to hear from you before then.

Thank you as always for your on-going generosity in support of our church.

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

STAMP HERE



Vacation Bible School



The Congregational Church of Amherst, UCC

Join us for a Holy Land Adventure as we travel back in time to learn what life was like when Jesus was growing up. Each day, kids will be immersed in a different Bible story through games, music, crafts, snacks, and more!



Dates: August 3rd- 7th 2026

Time: 9 am - noon daily

Ages: Preschoolers - Rising 5th graders

Cost: \$30 per child

Rising 6th - 12th graders can be Youth Volunteers!



Register Online by July 27: ccamherst.org/vbsreg

April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5) EASTER SUNDAY 7:00 Sunrise Service 10:00 Easter Worship 11:15 Fellowship	6) 10:00 WA Workshop	7) 5:00 Church Council 6:30 Confirmation Class 7:00 Trustees of the Facility	1) 10:00 Adult Confirmation	2) 7:00 Maundy Thursday Service	3) 4)	
12) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Youth Choir 11:30 Christian Ed 3:00 Racial Justice Program 6:30 Senior Youth Group	13) 10:00 WA Workshop	14) 10:00 WA Board 7:00 Communications Team 7:00 Diaconate	8) 10:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Adult Confirmation	9) 10:00 Congregational Care 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	10) 11)	
19) SHINE SUNDAY 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Youth Choir 11:30 Junior Youth Group 11:30 Racial Justice Team	20) 10:00 WA Workshop	21) 10:00 Caregivers Circle 6:30 Confirmation Class	15) 10:00 Adult Confirmation 5:30 Budget & Finance Team 7:00 New Member Info	16) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	17) 18)	
26) 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship 11:30 Youth Choir	27) 10:00 WA Workshop	28) 4:00 WOW Team 7:00 World Service	22) 7:00 Adult Confirmation	23) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:00 New Member Info 7:30 Chancel Choir	24) 25)	
			29)	30) 6:00 Bell Choir 7:30 Chancel Choir	27) 28)	