



# VILLAGE SPIRE

May 2026



## ANNUAL MEETING

**Sunday, May 17, 2026**

After the worship service, we'll enjoy a brief time of fellowship and coffee, and the meeting will begin around 11:30 a.m. in the community room and on Zoom.

*All members are encouraged to attend. Childcare will be provided.*

The Zoom link will be emailed to members the week of May 11.

### **A UCC 5-for-5 Appeal: Strengthen the Church**

Each day, visions and dreams are created in the hearts of many in the United Church of Christ. Through the *Strengthen the Church* offering, they can become a reality. As God calls our congregations to be "church" in new ways, your gift will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop spiritual life in our youth and young adults. Because of this offering, many more will hear the good news that "God is still speaking." Your offerings are directed to your church's Conference, and Local Church Ministries. Checks may be written to *The Congregational Church of Amherst*, with *Strengthen the Church* noted on the memo line.

### **Membership**

Rev. Maureen Frescott, Senior Pastor  
May 2026

Every January, just after the New Year, 5.8 million Americans participate in a familiar annual ritual. With a newly formed resolution to better themselves, they sign up for gym memberships, believing the cost commitment will motivate them to commit the necessary time and effort as well. Yet, the majority of people who join gyms in January have stopped going by early February, and a whopping 67% never set foot in the gym at all. Savvy gym owners know this, which is why they recruit way more members than their facilities can accommodate. Gyms also count on those of us who keep our unused memberships active year after year in the belief that one day we will actually cross the threshold and become the "better person" we hope to be.

Thankfully, joining a church is not like joining a gym. Although, there is an old joke about a pastor who came up with an ingenious plan to rid the church of bats found nesting in the belfry. He added the critters to the congregation's membership rolls and not long after, he never saw them again (grin). All joking aside, people stop attending communities of faith for all sorts of reasons. Every year, to get a more accurate count of our membership, we move some folks on our rolls to an "inactive" list because they're no longer attending or participating in the life of the church. Some have moved away, some joined the church as Confirmands and their lives are now filled with school, work, or children of their own, and some drifted away over time or simply stopped coming. We have various methods for checking in on those we haven't seen in a while, but often people drift away or no longer attend because their life circumstances, expectations, or spiritual journey's have led them elsewhere.

Of course, those we haven't seen in many years sometimes return - at Christmas and Easter, for weddings, baptisms, and funerals, or when their life circumstances change and they feel drawn to a community of faith to find support, guidance, or meaning. Then there are those in our local Amherst community who have never been members and rarely attend, if ever, but still point to our historic church on the green and say, "That's my church," taking ownership and likely some solace in knowing that should they ever need us, we are here.

This leads us to the elephant-in-the-room wondering: What does it mean to be a member of a faith community? In the Catholic church, once you're baptized into a parish, you're a member for life, regardless of your level of participation. But churches like ours which follow a "congregational" model have a different understanding of what it means to be a member. We don't have a hierarchal structure, meaning, we don't have bishops, boards, or a flow of funds from above that dictate what we teach/preach, who our pastor is, where we focus our mission, or how we spend our money. In the United Church of Christ, we have a covenantal relationship with the wider

## 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  
*Church Office Administrator*  
*Organist*  
officeadmin@ccamherst.org

Larissa Riley  
*Director of Youth Ministries*  
churchschool@ccamherst.org

## Why Buy a Rotary Raffle Ticket?

Over the years that we have participated in the **Milford Rotary Club 50/50 Raffle** fundraiser, some people have asked "why don't I just give \$20 to the church instead of half going to Milford Rotary?" Here are a few good reasons:

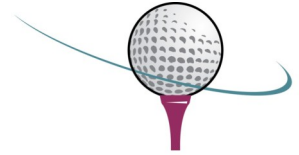
- ◆ Milford Rotary Club covers all the expenses including fronting the prize money (a total of \$12,500.00) and printing the tickets.
- ◆ Milford Rotary Club solicits all the great coupons included on every ticket.
- ◆ You could win! Two years ago one of the tickets we sold was the grand prize winner of \$5,000.00, last year one of our tickets was the 3rd prize winner of \$1,250.00
- ◆ The church could win! Many of the tickets sold name the church on the raffle stub. Several years ago, the church was the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize winner of \$1,250.00

In the 6 years we have participated in this raffle the portion of ticket sales that went to MRC has come back to us 3-fold by way of \$17,500 in donations from Milford Rotary Club to the Capital Campaign, Home Starter, and the Youth Group Mission Trip. The Robert Jackson Fund at MRC even donated the two newer maple trees in the area next to the church.

### All good reasons!

Raffle tickets are on sale now, and can be purchased at coffee hour or 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.

## Milford Rotary's 100 Holes of Golf



### Raffle Tickets

## 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](mailto:pastormaureen@ccamherst.org) to receive the Zoom link.

### UPCOMING SCHEDULE

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

- May 6, 13 World Religions: What Do Others Believe?
- May 20, 27 What We Believe: Our Personal Statement of Faith



## **Membership**, continued from page 1

church, meaning we support common missions and share common resources with other UCC churches, but each of our congregations is autonomous. The membership of each church is responsible for the life, mission, and funding of their church and each member has a vote when it comes to determining the direction, focus, and budget of the church.

That's quite a bit of responsibility, but it's also a gift and a privilege that we accept when we commit ourselves to membership. If you listen closely to the covenantal promises that are made when people join our congregation (which you'll have an opportunity to do on Sunday, May 3rd), you'll notice that we make a commitment as individuals and as a congregation to support one another and contribute to the life of the church, through attendance at worship, working together towards our common mission, and growing in our relationship with God.

Having said this, there is no one-size-fits-all form of membership. Some of us have the means to contribute our time, talent, and treasure to sustain and facilitate the work of the church, while others have less of all of the above to contribute. Some of us have the space in our lives to attend Sunday morning worship on a regular basis, while others have work or family commitments that make it much harder to do the same. There are also those who attend and contribute to the life of our church regularly but for various reasons have chosen not to officially become members. Which means they can participate fully in the life of the church and serve on a ministry team (apart from becoming Moderator or Treasurer) but forgo the right to vote on congregational matters.

On Sunday, May 17th, after worship, we will gather as a congregation for our Annual Meeting. We'll vote on our yearly budget, and proposed changes to our bylaws, and elect a slate of volunteers to serve in new roles and continuing roles. It may not sound exciting, but it really is a joy to see the church at work in this way. As so often it's at these meetings where we witness leaps of faiths and heartened commitments to our calling as followers of Jesus, as we strive to be the church that God wills us to be.

Church membership is not like a gym membership, where there's a low expectation that we'll follow through on the commitment, and few will miss us when we're unable to will ourselves to cross the threshold. With every person who says, "I want to be a part of what you're doing here," we become greater as a whole, and we become better equipped to work towards the kinder, more loving, more compassionate, more just world that we believe God is willing us to create, together.

Peace and blessings,  
*Pastor Maureen*



### **Shine Sunday** **"God's Will Be Done"** **May 17 10:00 a.m.**

Our monthly Themed Worship returns on the third Sunday in May! 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 May 17th we'll gather with the disciples as the risen Jesus sends them off to serve in his name with God's Spirit guiding them. But how would they learn to distinguish God's Will from their human will? 2,000 years later, we face the same challenge. After worship, we'll gather for our CCA Annual Meeting, calling on our Still Speaking God to guide us as well. We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!



## Civil Rights and the Church: 1964-1965

Sue Spiess, Historian

During the early months of 1964, life in the Congregational Church of Amherst followed the typical pattern of meetings, concerns over an underfunded budget, Bouillion Hour after church (no coffee served then!), an active Couples Club and Woman's Association, and a busy church school led by Burton Knight.

However, the world outside was changing. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963 and its aftermath ushered in a time of upheaval and unrest in the nation, and it reverberated in Amherst.

At the January 1964 Annual Meeting, the church approved the formation of a Social Action Committee to discuss contemporary political problems and our involvement with the Civil Rights issue. The committee stated that "we feel that our responsibility is to help inform the church membership in areas of social action and to take leadership in initiating action. But we are no spokesmen for the church unless you vote to give us authority on specific occasions." The motion was approved.

Six months later, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law, a major victory of the civil rights movement. The issues, however, would remain unresolved for decades.

In March 1965, following the Selma to Montgomery marches, Rev. Kraft read a protest of the violation of the rights of men and women in our country, signed by the deacons. Copies were sent to the US Senators Norris Cotton and Thomas J. McIntyre after the congregation had the opportunity to also sign.

The following report was included in the *Milford Cabinet*, under the headline "**Amherst Church in Protest at Violation of Rights in Alabama**":

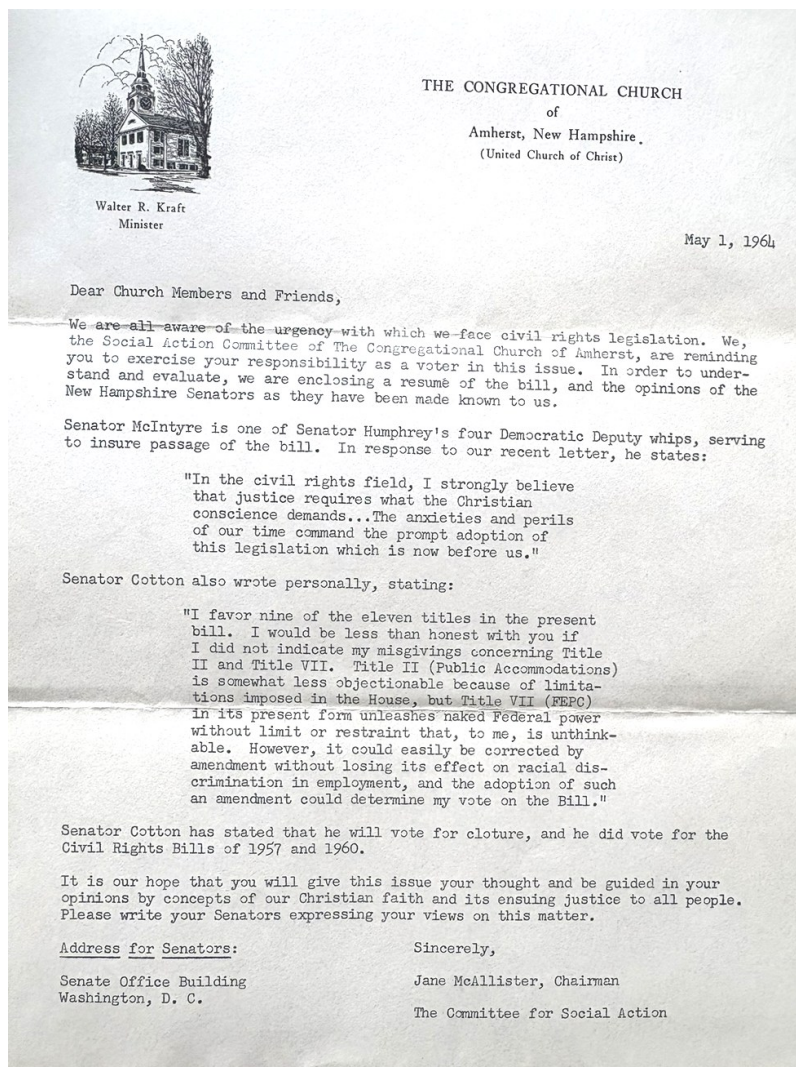
We, the undersigned, gathered at the Congregational Church of Amherst, New Hampshire, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of March 1965 wish to protest:

- (a) the use of inhuman police techniques on men, women, and children; the denial of voting privileges and having a part in government by the consent of the governed
- (b) The denial of voting privileges and of having a part in government by the consent of the government
- (c) not merely the brutal taking of life; but the greater crime found in the subversion of Federal Constitution, the tramping on its Bill of Right, and the debasement of the concept of liberty and justice for all.

Therefore, as concerned citizens, we urge all dispatch in such Congressional action as shall correct this denial of those freedoms, which before the world, we claim to be the champion.

While we don't have a record of the actual responses by Senators McIntyre and Cotton, we do have a copy of the letter sent to church members summarizing their responses (shown below).

Politics, civil rights, and the Vietnam War would continue to disrupt a nation and the Congregational Church of Amherst and eventually result in a split within the church.



## Youth Ministries

### Church School (preschool - 7th grade)

Regular Classes: May 3<sup>rd</sup>, May 10<sup>th</sup>, May 17<sup>th</sup>, May 31<sup>st</sup>  
NO Church School on May 24<sup>th</sup> (Memorial Day Weekend)

June 7<sup>th</sup> is Children's Sunday - All Children are invited to participate in the worship service

### Confirmation Class

May 5<sup>th</sup> and May 19<sup>th</sup>: Evening Meetings

June 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rehearsal Dinner

June 7<sup>th</sup>: Confirmation will take place during the Children's Sunday Worship Service



### Junior Youth Group (5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade)

May 31<sup>st</sup>: We will help with Levi Sunday Cleanup after worship and then celebrate the end of the year with a pizza party!

### Senior Youth Group (8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Sun. May 3<sup>rd</sup>: 6:30 - 8:00 PM Meeting

Sat. May 9<sup>th</sup>: 6:30 - 8:00 PM Cookie Decorating

Sun. May 10<sup>th</sup>: 9:30 AM - 11:45 AM Set up before worship, Cookie Walk after worship

Sun. May 17<sup>th</sup>: 6:30 - 8:00 PM Meeting

Sun. May 31<sup>st</sup>: 6:30 - 8:00 PM Meeting

## Register Now 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.



**Dates:** August 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> 2026

**Time:** 9am - noon daily

**Ages:** Preschoolers - rising 5<sup>th</sup> graders

**Cost:** \$30 per child (financial assistance is available - contact Larissa)

**T-shirts:** Pre-Order only - \$10 each (shirts will NOT be sold during VBS week)

**Youth Volunteers:** rising 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> graders are needed to assist adult leaders and guide younger children (no charge)

Register for VBS online: [www.ccamherst.org/vbsreg](http://www.ccamherst.org/vbsreg)  
Contact Larissa Riley or Gretchen Davis with questions

## Levi Sunday is May 31



Wear your work clothes to church and join us after worship for our annual spring cleaning day. We have our usual spring projects such as yard clean up, spreading mulch and sweeping/cleaning the parking lot.

Bring your own tools for the jobs you want to tackle. Many hands make light work!

## SHARE Food Pantry

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

### May 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.

**Many thanks for your continuing support!**

## 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](mailto: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.

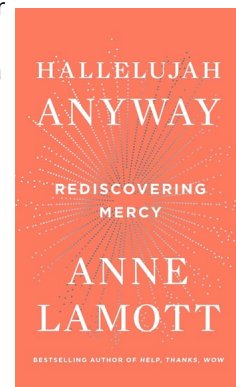
If you have any questions about donations for the sale or assisting with the sale, please contact Sally Bowkett at 603-673-7409 or Alicia Wight at 603-345-0155.

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

## Book Nook Monthly Book Recommendation



"Mercy is radical kindness," Anne Lamott writes in her enthralling and heartening book, *Hallelujah Anyway*. It's the permission you give others—and yourself—to forgive a debt, to absolve the unabsolvable, to let go of the judgment and pain that make life so difficult. As we struggle to navigate an increasingly complex world and understand our place in it, mercy points the way forward. By embracing mercy, we give our families, our communities, and even ourselves the opportunity to see the world in gentler and more engaging ways. Full of Lamott's trademark honesty, humor and forthrightness, *Hallelujah Anyway* is profound and caring, funny and wise—a hopeful book of hands-on spirituality.



## Disparities in Health Care Are Prevalent in NH: We Can Make a Difference

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Harriet Ward Memorial Antiracism Speaker Series Event took place at the Congregational Church of Amherst, NH, on Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM. Jo Porter, the Chief Strategy Officer at the NH Center for Justice and Equity shared her expertise regarding the unequal distribution of health care in New Hampshire, specifically, and our country as a whole. She entitled her talk, “*The Nexus of Health and Racism*”. This talk was sponsored by the *New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ Antiracism Ministries Group (ARMg)* and supported by the *Congregational Church of Amherst Racial Justice Team*.

Kira Morehouse, a member of the UCC-ARM, opened the presentation with introductory remarks about how the speaker series was started and to whom it is dedicated, Harriet Ward. Ms. Morehouse highlighted the selfless commitment to antiracism that Harriet Ward embodied throughout her life and modeled for all of us. Tivvi Pare, Co-chair of the Antiracism Ministries Group, then introduced our speaker, Jo Porter. In addition to her current position as Chief Strategy Officer at the NH Center for Justice and Equity, Ms. Porter spent over 20 years as a researcher and then Director of the Institute for Health Policy and Practice at UNH. In 2024, Ms. Porter received the Elliot M. Stone Award of Excellence in Health Data Leadership, a national award recognizing individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership and innovation in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of health data.

At the outset of her talk, Ms. Porter reminded us that according to the *World Health Organization*, good health embodies not only the absence of disease but also physical, mental and social well-being. She described data indicating disparate health care in New Hampshire, especially for Black and Hispanic individuals, in availability of services, quality of services, and affordability of services. For example, Ms. Porter noted that Black and Latino populations encompass the larger share of Medicaid coverage for medical services. These two groups are covered disproportionately by the insurance program that pays the lowest rates. One reason for such dissimilar insurance coverage is income. In the state of NH, while only 6% of white individuals are at the poverty level, 11% of Black/African Black and 14% of Hispanic/Latino individuals are below the poverty level.

Pregnancy-related mortality rates also mirror the vast difference between races, according to Ms. Porter. While close to 15% of white women die during childbirth, 49.4% of Black women succumb while giving birth. These significantly different outcomes may be related to lack of income to purchase adequate medical insurance (*leading to avoiding medical appointments, inability to purchase needed medications*), lack of supports to access prenatal care (*transportation, childcare, time off from work*), or discrimination from health care workers limiting adequate care. In a survey of health care professionals, 47% said they witnessed discrimination in the health care system based on race or ethnicity.

Despite these somber facts, Ms. Porter said there is much we can do to continue the quest of antiracism. We can be present by reading about racism and antiracism activities, participating in antiracism workshops/activities, and supporting people of color in our neighborhoods. We can write our congressmen about issues that impact equity in health care. For example, Ms. Porter said that the significant tax credits afforded folks who used the Affordable Care Act Program are set to expire unless Congress continues to extend them. That would mean higher premiums and reduced subsidies for folks who may not have the income to support those increases. We can continue to use our skills, our voices, and our love for our neighbor to make New Hampshire an even better place for all individuals.



Submitted by: The New Hampshire Conference ARMg and the CCA Racial Justice Team

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

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AMHERST, NH

## Congregational Church of Amherst Fundraiser



Ecosmith Recyclers Inc. and Congregational Church are proud to partner in hosting a fundraising clothing and shoe drive.

Raise money to support your local church by donating new or used articles of clothing, pairs of shoes, and household textiles.



# CLOTHING & SHOE DRIVE

### WHAT TO DONATE

- Shirts
- Jeans
- Pants
- Shorts
- Sweaters
- Jackets
- Socks
- Dresses
- Skirts
- Bed linen
- Purses
- Backpacks
- Hats
- Scarves
- Belts
- Sneakers
- Sandals
- Dress Shoes
- Boots
- Towels

PLEASE BAG SHOES AND CLOTHING SEPARATELY

### WHEN

**April 29<sup>th</sup> through May 18<sup>th</sup>**

### WHERE

**Meeting Place Plaza**  
199 Route 101, Amherst, NH

### CONTACT

**Colleen Cushing**  
colleencushing54@gmail.com

All collected material is destined for export to less advantaged persons in developing nations around the world.

info@ecosmithrecyclers.com • 11 Byam Road, New Boston, NH 03070 • 603-647-1088