VILLAGE SPIRE

Fall schedule kicks off September 13 with Rally Day celebration

RALLY DAY is our annual celebration of the beginning of a new church year. In the worship service the Chancel Choir will return and share in the music ministry again after their summer break. Church School begins anew, with classes available for preschool children through middle school youth.

After worship, please join us for an **all-church potluck picnic.** Our Fellowship Team will cook up hamburgers and hot dogs, and we ask folks who are able to contribute with a side dish, a salad, or a dessert. Families with names A-M should bring a side or salad, and N-Z families a dessert. All ages are welcome, and a $5 adult/$10 family donation to help cover costs will be gratefully appreciated.

This is a wonderful opportunity to renew friendships and make new ones while enjoying good food and fun games. And word has it there will even be a clown! Please plan to join us in worship at 10:00 am on Sunday, September 13, and stay for the picnic!

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS -

Also on Rally Sunday, all children, youth, and adults are invited to bring their school backpacks or work bags to church for a special Back-to-School blessing! Our pastors will offer a blessing during our 10:00 am service, and everyone will receive a special tag to keep on their bags as a reminder of the blessing throughout the year.

SECOND HOUR PROGRAM SET FOR SEPTEMBER 27

When most people think about creating space for those with disabilities, they picture wheel-chairs, ramps, and elevators. However, far more people are impacted by disabilities that are hidden.

This Second Hour presentation invites participants to experience several common hidden disabilities in a playful game setting. Each game will be followed by discussion about engaging people you suspect experience these challenges. Hosted by our WOW Team and facilitated by Alison Batey, this is meant to be a learning experience for all ages, as we live into our mission to be a congregation that is welcoming to all!

"LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT"

I don't know about you, but whenever we near the end of August and people begin talking about Labor Day plans and the start of the school year, the same thought always come to mind: "Where has the summer gone?" You've likely uttered these words yourself, with a similar tone of wistful lament, tinged with a note of astonishment. The summer months, as packed as they can be with traveling, camps, lake visits, and family gatherings, can feel like they fly by in comparison to other seasons. In New England, we seem to accept that Spring is just a blip between March mud and May mosquitoes, and that Fall is pleasingly paced with its changing leaves and cooling temperatures, and quite honestly, have you ever heard anyone say, with lament, "Where has the winter gone?" (lovers of snow sports are an exception!)

Of course, there are those who won't miss the heat or the humidity that summer brings, but I believe the lament that most of us feel at summer's end is related to the anticipated loss of summer's slower pace, easier schedules, and longer days in which to enjoy the beauty of creation – in morning walks, evening cookouts, and sitting outside long after dark just chatting or star gazing. Personally, it's the lessening of the light that causes me to lament at summer's end, as I will miss having daylight bookending my workday, giving me the illusion that I have "more time" in the day overall.

In the church, we have entire seasons devoted to this longing we feel for light – Advent and Christmas – where we celebrate the coming of God's light into a world that feels like it's too often shrouded in darkness. It could be said that our entire faith is built on this longing for light. It can feel like darkness has descended upon us at any time, regardless of what the calendar says – as we experience personal loss, the pain of others, and the never-ending troubles of our world. We often say it's faith that provides a light at the end of the tunnel, a hope in things not yet realized that helps us move forward, a trust that the forces of good will outweigh the forces of evil. This for me is the purpose of the church. We are light-seekers and light-bearers. We come together seeking the very thing that we end up bearing for one another.

At summer's end, as we find our way back to church, or if we've been here all along, we celebrate the brightening of our communal light - as our Church School resumes, our Choirs reconvene, and classes, meetings, and gatherings begin to fill our calendars once again.

Each offers an opportunity for us to experience the community, connection, and comfort that we seek, while we in turn offer it to others. Our Sunday of re-gathering, which we call Rally Day, is September 13th, and our sanctuary will once

Continued on page 3

VILLAGE SPIRE

Our 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 am
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 though Friday
from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Newsletter articles are due
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

Larissa Riley
Director of Youth Ministries
churchschool@ccamherst.org

Michael Havay
Church Office Administrator
Organist
officeadmin@ccamherst.org

LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT, cont. from page 2

again be filled with the voices of our children, our choir, and those whose summer schedules take them elsewhere. This fall, we'll continue to follow the SHINE curriculum to connect our Worship with our Church School, as every Sunday, our children and adults will explore the same scripture readings and themes together. The tagline of the SHINE curriculum is "Living in God's Light" – and in such a time as this, when it can feel like we're not experiencing enough light, my hope is that we will find it in this community of Christ.

However you participate in this community – frequently or as you're able, physically or virtually, as a light-seeker or a light-bearer, or both – the shifting season is an invitation to come together, to brighten our days as the sunlight lessens around us. I pray that YOU find that light here. As I have no doubt that others will find that light in you. Welcome back, Church!

Peace and blessings, *Pastor Maureen*

Adult Confirmation: A Life-Long Journey

15 Sessions–September through April, Wednesday mornings and evenings on Zoom

Last fall, we introduced a Confirmation class for adults to explore the same topics of faith that our youth confirmands focus on during their year-long journey. This fall, our adults will continue the journey with new topics to explore, in recognition of our life-long commitment to learning and growing in our faith. This class is open to all, regardless of what faith tradition you were raised in (or not) or whether you experienced Confirmation as a youth or attended last year's sessions. All are welcome to attend, as you are able!

The class will include videos and discussion facilitated by Pastor Maureen. Classes will be held on Wednesday mornings and evenings on ZOOM. The morning class will meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. The evening class will meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Participants are welcome to attend either class as your schedule allows.

Note: during some months, morning and evening classes will be held on the same day to accommodate holidays. Email pastormaureen@ccamherst.org to receive the Zoom link, or access the link on our church website in the Members Section under "Wednesday Adult Ed."

10:00-11:30 am	7:00-8:30 pm	TOPIC
September 16	September 23	CREATION: Myths and Moral Responsibility
October 7	October 14	THE BIBLE: How It Was Made
October 21	October 28	OLD TESTAMENT: The Overarching Story
November 4	November 11	GOD and VIOLENCE: The God of Two Testaments
November 18	November 25	GOD and POLITICS: The Influence of Faith
December 2	December 2	APOCALYPSE: Beliefs About the End Times
December 16	December 16	THE STORY OF JESUS: Birth, Death, Resurrection
January 6	January 13	SERMON ON THE MOUNT: Radical Teachings of Jesus
January 20	January 27	HEAVEN and THE AFTERLIFE: What comes next?
February 3	February 3	HELL and THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: How did we get here?
February 17	February 24	DOUBT: The Ants in the Pants of Faith
March 3	March 10	JUDAISM: The Faith of Our Ancestors
March 17	March 24	THE EARLY CHURCH: History and Heretics
April 7	April 14	THE PRESENT CHURCH: What is a Christian Today?
April 21	April 21	THE FUTURE CHURCH: What will it look like?

Woman's Association News

Workshops Resume in September

The weekly Monday morning Workshops of the Women's Association will resume on **September 14**, from 10:00 am until noon in the church vestry.

The Workshops are informal gatherings at which members and friends of the WA meet to plan events, such as the upcoming Holiday Fair, to work on projects, or just to enjoy the fellowship of the group.

All church and community women are welcome to attend any Monday. If you have questions about the Woman's Association or the Workshops, contact Adrienne Topliffe at (603) 673-7436 or by email: <abtopliffe@gmail.com>.

Holiday Fair set for November 21

Once again the Woman's Association will hold its popular Holiday Fair this fall on **Saturday, November 21**. The fair features wreaths and holiday decorations, a large selection of crafts, gifts and treasures, baked goods, a silent auction, a raffle and much more. It's always on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, so the date is easy to remember.

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

ways to participate! Crafts are an important part of the fair offerings, so if you would like to join others in crafting activities, please join us for workshops on Monday mornings at 10:00, starting September 14th in the vestry. Also, if you would like to donate crafts made at home, they will be gratefully accepted.

Treasures: We will be accepting items suitable for our Holiday Fair's Treasures Tables beginning September 14. Treasures items can be dropped off in the church vestry on Sunday or Monday mornings.

Questions? For more information about crafts you can contact Deb Boczenowski at (978) 302-3851 or <dbocz25@gmail.com>.

For questions about donations contact Theresa van Ham at (603) 325-5062 or email <twvham@gmail.com>.

For info about WA, contact Adrienne Topliffe via email <abtopliffe@gmail.com>, or cell (603) 913-7565, or talk to any WA member!

No Good Stuff Sale this Fall, but Treasures wanted

The Woman's Association will not be holding a Good Stuff Sale this Fall. The next sale is scheduled to be held on **April 30—May 1, 2027.**

Due to storage limitations, we will not be able to accept any donations for that sale until sometime after the new year. Details about what, when, and where to donate items to next spring's Good Stuff Sale will appear in church publications in early 2027.

However, we are now accepting vintage, new, and like new items suitable for our Holiday Fair's Treasures Table. Treasures items can be dropped off in the church vestry on Sunday or Monday mornings, beginning September 14. Please contact Theresa van Ham at <twvham@gmail.com> or (603) 325-5062 with any questions about Treasures donations.

Good Stuff Sale Thanks

The Woman's Association would like to express belated thanks to all church members and friends who helped to make our 2026 Good Stuff Sale such a success. The sale netted just over $3,560! The proceeds from the sale enable the WA to support our church and numerous community organizations throughout the year.

Continued on page 5

Good Stuff Thanks, cont.

Thank you to all who donated their "good stuff" to the sale, and special thanks go to the following "Friends of the WA" who generously gave of their time to help with set-up, clean-up, and/or sales. Your help was invaluable in making the sale go so smoothly. We apologize to anyone who was inadvertently missed.

Dave Phelps	Dave Poltack	Kathe Richardson
Susan Cooke	Bruce Manchester	Heather MacDonald
Jasper Emmons	Alice Handwerk	Scott Cushing
Stephanie Emmons	George Valeri	Ric Magro
Susan Deschenes	Jen Thibeault	Doug Topliffe
Steve Boczenowski	Janet Moses	Avery Morin
Beth Bowkett	Linda Culatta	Scott Hewett
Dick Stout	Holly Tonnesen	Wendy Valeri

From the MUSIC DIRECTOR

It is a wonderful, exciting, and busy start to our church year! Many great opportunities are available to anyone who would like to participate in the music ministry of the church.

Chancel Choir rehearses on Thursday evenings at 7:30 pm in the vestry, starting September 10. We enjoy preparing music for worship throughout the church year, and a Christmas Holiday concert too! There are currently 24 of us. We rehearse several pieces each week, preparing the group well in advance of singing the anthems in the church services.

Bell Choir rehearses in the Sanctuary on Thursdays at 6:00 pm, starting September 10. We play during a worship service once a month. You are welcome to attend a rehearsal to see if you are interested in ringing. Please let me know in advance if you plan to attend.

Youth Choirs meet on Sundays after church, beginning September 20. Children may have their snack after church school, and meet me in the Vestry. I will begin with our youngest children, and hope older kids will help out. It is fun to be a leader, as we have seen in Vacation Bible School. The second part of rehearsal will be spent on music for older children who can follow along with words and printed music. There are moments throughout the year when the kids sing as one group. All children are welcome and may join at any time during the year.

Please reach out to me if you have questions about any of the music programs of the church—(603) 759-6468, <kalben1@comcast.net>.

Sara Phelps, Director of Music

THANKS FROM THE HEART

A Note from Andrea

Dear friends,

Thank you for your beautiful notes, kind words of support and encouragement, and generous gifts as my time with CCA comes to a close. These past 30 years as part of this congregation have been a true blessing. I will always carry with me the warmth and spirit of this community. I wish each of you the very best. As excited as I am for this next chapter, I will miss you dearly, and I hope our paths cross again in the years ahead.

With all my love,
Andrea

Summer Mission Trip

On July 5, seventeen teens from the Senior Youth Group and four adult chaperones traveled to Savannah, GA to immerse themselves in service, prayer, and group bonding. Every day began with devotions, and ended with reflections and prayers. The group prepared and served several meals for members of the community, painted a house, and helped local mission organizations with their daily work by assisting with cleaning, folding laundry, and sorting donations. Throughout the week, the students connected with members of the local community and were inspired to seek out more service opportunities here in NH. The SYG is grateful for all of the support of this congregation and will continue to share pictures and highlights from the trip this fall.

In August, our church was full of joyful noise and activity every morning for a week as we hosted VBS for the fifth summer in a row! Under the leadership of Gretchen and Larissa, twelve additional adults and nineteen youth volunteers lead forty-eight children on a Holy Land Adventure to *Hometown Nazareth*. Daily activities included skits presented by the teens, stories in the "Nazareth Library," games, crafts, science experiments, and special snacks from Jesus's time! Throughout the week, the children learned about Jesus's life and how he was once a kid, just like them. The week ended with learning about serving others, so the children assembled 40 "Birthday Bag" kits for the SHARE food pantry. Vacation Bible School would not have been possible without the many donations from the congregation and all of the volunteers who gave a week of their summer to support our children. Thank You!

This is a cozy area with rocking chairs, a changing table, toys, and books for the youngest members of the congregation. The Nursery Attendant, Melissa, will be there to welcome little ones and their caregivers at any time before or during the service. Families are welcome to come and go as needed. Some parents may choose to drop off their children and return to the Sanctuary, while others will stay and watch the live-streamed service while feeding a baby or letting a toddler get their wiggles out. Please feel free to use the nursery in the way that best fits your family's needs.

Fall Youth Ministries

Children are always welcome in worship, but we have a few additional options for children beginning on September 13 —

The **Church School program** is for children in preschool through 7th grade, and takes place during the second part of the Worship service. Children participate in the beginning of the service with their families. After the "Passing of the Peace," they leave the sanctuary and go to classrooms with their teachers.

The *Shine: Living in God's Light* curriculum is used in all classes to introduce children to Bible stories, spiritual practices, and God's love using games, crafts, and other age-appropriate activities. Each week, church school classes will cover the same scripture or theme that the rest of the congregation hears in the sanctuary. All classes are led by an adult that has been background checked and trained in our Church's *Safe Places* policy.

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HAROLD H. WILKINS SR. (1887-1965) - Dedicated and Revered Church Member and Community Leader

By Sue Spiess, Historian

While this column rarely focuses on one lay member of the church, Harold H. Wilkins Sr. was a remarkable man who believed in service to the church and his community. His accomplishments are almost too lengthy to reiterate, but as parents, teachers, and children prepare to return to school, a recognition of the man for whom Wilkins School is named seems appropriate.

Mr. Wilkins was born in Amherst and lived his entire life here. He and his father owned and operated Wilkins and Son Lumber in Milford, still in the family since 1808. In addition, "there were few phases of community life in which Mr. Wilkins did not have an active and sympathetic interest," noted the *Milford Cabinet* upon his death. He served as the school moderator for decades and was on the building committee for Clark School. He was the town moderator for 29 years, a representative to the General Court (NH Legislature), a founding member of the Amherst Historical Society, active in the Daniel Webster Council of the Boy Scouts, a 50-year member of the Odd Fellows Lodge in Milford, and a member of the Amherst Century Club.

While Mr. Wilkins was dedicated to his town, he was equally dedicated to his church. He was a Senior Deacon Emeritus, trustee, church school teacher, and superintendent; and on committees to raise the budget, to find a new minister, to renovate or repair. He was a delegate to county, state, and regional conferences, and served four years as moderator at the NH Conference meetings.

Tragedy struck in 1965 when a car the 78- year- old Mr. Wilkins was repairing slipped off a jack and crushed him. *The Village Spire* and the *Milford Cabinet* were filled with tributes to the man revered by both the church and the community.The July 1965 *Village Spire* included this editorial:

"Our town and church are often described as filled with 'transients'. Harold was a valuable link between the old and new members. An outstanding trait was his appreciation of the contributions of the newcomer as well as his ability to adjust and work with them. Rare was the Sunday he was not in his pew, center inside, left. He gave us a feeling of security by his regular attendance at worship and other church-related organizations. We found strength in his willingness to accept responsibility and in his optimism toward passing problems. Someone has said that what a man concerns himself with makes him what he is. Surely, a lifetime of serving God molded and shaped the character of Harold H. Wilkins. Our loss is great indeed, but his influence lives on and we are that much richer."

The *Milford Cabinet* included this reflection about Mr. Wilkins and the naming of the new elementary school:

"If he was part of Amherst, Amherst was also part of him, and he never doubted the worth of integrity and hard work, of devotion to God and to his neighbors. Amherst citizens voted unanimously Tuesday night to name their new elementary school after Harold H. Wilkins. If that school can build in the Amherst youth of the future the kind of character represented by the man for whom it is to be named, the cause of education – and of America—will be well served indeed."

As you drive by Wilkins School, if your children attend the school, or you work there, take a moment to reflect on the man for whom this school is named and his legacy. He was truly a remarkable man.

Church School cont.

We will have four classes this fall:
- Preschool
- Lower Elementary (K-Grade 2)
- Upper Elementary (Grades 3-4)
- Middle School (Grades 5-7)

New friends are welcome to join any time during the year. At the end of the worship service, pre-schoolers must be picked up by their parents in their classroom on the second floor. Teachers will bring all older children to the Community Room to meet their parents. Parents must complete a *Youth Ministries Child Registration Form* for all children that attend Church School or are dropped off in the Nursery.

Confirmation PROGRAM

The Confirmation Program is a nine month experience designed to give teens a chance to dig deeper into their own faith as well as what it means to be a member of our church and the United Church of Christ. Evening classes are held approximately twice per month, with one over-night retreat in the winter. In the spring, students can choose to be confirmed into full membership in the church. **There will be an info session for interested teens and their parents on Sunday, September 27 at 6 pm.**

Youth Groups

Youth Groups provide an opportunity for middle school and high school students to form a supportive community with peers through team building activities and meaningful service experiences.

JUNIOR HIGH GROUP

Junior High Youth Group for students in Grades 5-7 meets after Sunday worship once or twice a month. The first event will be an **Apple Picking Outing** after church on Sunday, **October 4.**

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP

Senior High Youth Group for students in Grades 8-12 typically meets 2 or 3 Sundays per month from 6:30-8:00 pm, with some occasional events on other days of the week. Teens that are active participants in SYG may attend the annual Mission Trip in the summer. **The first group meeting will be a Campfire behind the church on September 27 at 6:30 pm.**

Contact Larissa Riley, Director of Youth Ministries if you have questions about any of our programs for youth.

SHARE PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

SHARE Food Pantry requests for the month of September include:

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

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, 1 Columbus Avenue in Milford. For directions please call their office at (603) 673-9898. Many thanks for your continued generosity!

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

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Shine Sundays return on September 20

This fall, we'll continue to follow the "SHINE: Living in God's Light" scripture readings in both our Church School and our Sunday worship. We'll also continue to celebrate the THIRD Sunday of every month as SHINE SUNDAY - where we step out-side of our traditional order of worship and weave in interactive liturgies, readings, and activities.

On these Sundays, our children participate in the beginning of the service and then go to Church School to engage the theme in their class time. We hope you can join us, either in-person or online!

SHINE
LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

Here are our SHINE SUNDAY dates and themes for 2026-27:

September 20	In the Garden
October 18	Song of Creation
November 15	Choosing Peace
December 20	Born in Bethlehem
January 17	Follow Me
February 21	In the Wilderness
March 21	The Passion of Jesus
April 18	Come, Holy Spirit, Come!
May 16	The Good News

Blessing of the Animals Set for October 4

Come join us in a special outdoor service in celebration of all God's creatures on Sunday, October 4 at 3:00 pm. Bring your feathered, fleecy, or furry friends (or photo or stuffed animal) on a leash or in a carrier to receive a blessing and to honor their love, loyalty, and companionship.

No reservations are necessary. All pets must be able to remain under their owner's control.

September 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 9:00am PIV Open House 5:30pm Church Council 7:00pm Trustees	2 9:00am PIV Open House 1:00pm Bylaws Team 7:00pm Christian Education	3 1:00pm PIV Board Meeting	4	5
6 10:00am Worship 11:15am Fellowship Time	7 HOLIDAY - Labor Day	8 PIV first day of school 7:00pm Communications Team 7:00pm Diaconate	9 10:00am Staff Meeting	10 MDs Trash Pick Up 6:00pm Bell Choir 6:00pm Safety Team Meeting 7:30pm Chancel Choir	11	12 Old Home Day
13 RALLY SUNDAY 10:00am Worship 11:15am Fellowship Time	14 10:00am WA Workshop	15 10:00am Caregivers Circle 10:00am Congregational Care 10:00am WA Board 1:00pm Bylaws Team 5:00pm WOW Team	16 10:00am Adult Confirmation AM 4:30pm CAV Ticket Sales Meeting 5:30pm Budget & Finance	17 6:00pm Bell Choir 7:30pm Chancel Choir	18 5:00pm PIV Ice Cream Social (5:30)	19
20 10:00am Worship 11:15am Fellowship Time 11:30am Youth Choir 11:30am Racial Justice	21 10:00am WA Workshop	22 7:00pm World Service	23 10:00am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Adult Confirmation PM	24 MDs Trash Pick Up 6:00pm Bell Choir 7:30pm Chancel Choir	25	26
27 10:00am Worship 11:15am Fellowship Time 11:30am Youth Choir 11:30am Second Hour: Positive Approaches to Invisible Disabilities 6:00pm Confirmation Info Meeting 6:30pm Senior Youth Group	28 10:00am WA Workshop	29	30			