

VILLAGE SPIRE

May 2012



All Church Meeting May 20



The Trustees are calling all members to a congregational meeting on Sunday, May 20, immediately following the 10:00 a.m. worship service.

The purpose of the brief meeting is to update the congregation about our financial status and what the Trustees and other committees are doing about the projected deficit. Come to understand and find out how you can help your church and advance our mission.

Teachers and Youth Leaders: Save the Date



It takes an entire church community to give kids the faith foundation they need. If you have taught church school this year, helped with Middle High Youth Group, Senior High Youth Group, or Confirmation please join us. The Christian Education Committee would like to say thank you with special food and a gift from the children.

Sunday, May 6, 2011
11:00 a.m. (right after worship)
in the Community Room
Please RSVP so that we may
plan accordingly.

A Better Life

Richard G. Leavitt, Senior Pastor
May 2012

"We've received: *A Better Life*." That's what Netflix told me when I sent back the DVD we had watched the night before. I had to agree. I feel incredibly blessed to live the relatively comfortable lifestyle we do in this corner of the world. But such privilege is not the case for many, many others. Poverty, hunger, disease and violence rule in plenty of other parts of the world, sometimes not very far from our homes. With our favored status, it's easy to categorize and rationalize, to justify and mollify in order to stay on top. But those who claim to follow Jesus and proclaim the good news of his Easter resurrection dare not.

A Better Life—the film—holds the possibility of redemption for Carlos Galindo and his teenage son Luis, but issues of life and death are hardly neat and tidy. Resurrection and new life do not come for them in some easy, facile way. *A Better Life* is the story of an undocumented Mexican worker who labors in this country as a gardener for wealthy Americans. The man is a hard working, uneducated laborer, trying to do what he thinks is right, and devoted to providing for himself and his teenage son since his wife (the boy's mother) has left them. Carlos faces the disheartening day laborer cattle call while trying to scrape together enough money to buy a friend's truck and gardening tools and take over the man's business before he heads back to Mexico. Carlos arrives home dead tired each night and crawls into his makeshift bed on the sofa with little time for his needy

Continued on page 3

Congregational Care

*Caregiving provides many opportunities
for being drawn out of ourselves,
for pushing ourselves to focus
on others and their needs.
When we reach out to others and
are willing to stretch ourselves and
give warm and loving care,
both we as caregivers and
others as receivers of our care
stand to gain in ways
that encompass and go beyond
the physical.*

Would you like to know more about our church's Congregational Care ministry? Please contact Sara Phelps: kalben1@comcast.net

(Taken from *Prayers for Caregivers*,
Joan Guntzelman, Ligouri Publications,
2003)

CROP Walk Sunday, May 6



Registration begins at 1:15 p.m.
at St. Patrick's Church in Milford.

Walk begins at 2:00 p.m.

VILLAGE SPIRE

A Parish Newsletter
Editor, Andrea Cyr

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

Sunday Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Church school and nursery care available.

How to reach us:
Office Phone (603) 673-3231
Fax Phone (603) 673-1712
www.ccamherst.org

The church office
is open Monday–Friday,
from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Send in all news by the
15th of the month.

Announcements
for the Sunday bulletins
are due Thursdays.

OUR CHURCH STAFF:

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From Pastor Maureen

Thank You

My first month serving as the Associate Pastor of CCA has been full, frenzied, and fabulous!

In my first three weeks I've participated in five worship services (including leading the Easter Sunrise Service), led the Wednesday Study Group, attended staff meetings, Council and All-Committee night, met with Congregational Care, Christian Ed, and the Prayer Shawl Ministry, had lunch with the Woman's Association, browsed the Rummage Sale, saw several of our youth perform in *Anything Goes* at Souhegan High, and worked with the Senior High Youth Group as we prepare to head off to New Orleans on our mission trip on April 22. Whew!

And interspersed between all those activities are all the wonderful conversations and "getting to know you" moments that I've had with all of you. THANK YOU to all of you, for gracing me and Stephanie with such a warm and wonderful welcome to CCA and to the Amherst community. Stephanie is finishing out the school year back in CT and she'll be joining me here in Amherst on June 30, but as I'm still unpacking boxes at the parsonage and finding my way around, I can't tell you how amazing it's been to receive so many "Welcome to the Neighborhood" offerings of food and fellowship. Now I just need to get back into my walking/running/biking routine to lose the 5 lbs. I've gained since moving here. (Ha!)

It's been a wonderful first month at CCA, and I can't wait to see what God has in store for May!

Blessings,
Pastor Maureen

Rummage Sale Thanks

The Woman's Association would like to thank everyone who assisted with our Spring Rummage Sale. Thank you to those who donated items, helped with set-up, selling, or clean-up. We couldn't have done it without everyone's generous help. The sale raised \$1,739. Proceeds from the rummage sale enable the WA to make donations to support both the church and community organizations.

Thank You from SHYG!

The Senior High Youth Group would like to thank the congregation for making the Palm Sunday Cookie Walk such a success! The cookies SOLD OUT and the SHYG raised \$400 to help fund the mission trip to New Orleans. Thank you to all who baked and donated cookies: Moulton's Store, The Black Forest Cafe, The Good Loaf, Dutch Epicure, Frederick's Pastries, members of the congregation and the senior high youth!



A Better Life, continued from page 1

son, who spends a lot of time on his own. Meanwhile, Luis is struggling in high school with little motivation to follow in his dad's footsteps towards a limited future as a day laborer. He contemplates the allure of a street gang which offers some instant status and wealth, despite its frank threats of deadly violence. This frustrating, poignant story is played out for father and son as they negotiate the corruption of the black market, the futility of denied access to real education, not being able to apply for a driver's license, and dependence upon unsecured loans. When they become the victims of crime, they fear police involvement instead of genuine protection from the unsavory and unscrupulous who are exploiting their vulnerable status. They are never able to get very far ahead while living below the radar as undocumented residents, one step away from deportation.

We have a problem in this country. And it's not resolved simply by erecting a huge fence, tightening up the borders, increasing patrols, and instituting laws that encourage racial profiling. The fact is we can't live comfortably without the labor and contributions provided by these undocumented workers, but neither can we agree upon a reasonable path towards legal immigration or appropriate documented status with rights. We fear and resent those living below the radar of immigration enforcement, but our affluent appetites keep the market for their labor strong. The system is simply not working. And partisan rhetoric only inflames the debate. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue, though some would like to make it one. It's a complex problem missing an adequate solution because of our unwillingness to face reality. Often left out of the discussion are the nuances of human longing and genuine need that drive the cross-border migration. Frequently ignored is our discomfort with people of a different race and culture coming to *our* country. And law-abiding citizens can easily tend toward self-righteous legalism about what is realistic to expect from people simply searching for a better life. What will it take for us to develop reasonable paths to legal status? Who can and should be allowed to earn citizenship? Should children who have lived here since they were two or three years old continue to be punished and denied rights for the "sins" of their parents? Let's face it: We're stuck on the fact that we don't believe people should be living here illegally, while the reality is there are millions of undocumented workers already here. We need to figure out what we're going to do about it—together!

A story like this one in *A Better Life* doesn't try to resolve the complex issues of immigration by making simplistic and moralistic judgments about who is right and who is wrong. It's not about identifying the *good* guys and the *bad* guys. It captures the human drama and pathos that men and women and children face daily in their search for a better life. The challenge of legal immigration and citizenship that we face as a nation today will only be resolved when honest collaboration and realistic strategies are developed by government officials, business leaders, union workers, and people of faith who come together for sincere dialogue and respect for all God's people. May it be so!

Grace and peace,

Dick

Brownies Beautify Church Grounds

Second grade Brownies from Troop #20356, who meet at our church, donated and planted two flats of pretty pansies around the church grounds during their April 17 meeting. This project was their way of saying thank you to the church for providing them meeting space. Their leaders are Jen Mastergeorge, Kim Kirk and Lisa Mazur.

Of Note...

Pastor Maureen Frescott will be ordained on Sunday, May 6 in her home association, at King Street, United Church of Christ in Danbury, CT.

Former Interim Associate Pastor Carrie Burnap will be officially installed as Pastor in her new church, Forest Street Union Church, UCC in Methuen, MA on Sunday, May 6.

SHARE Food Pantry

The SHARE Food Pantry continues to be busy. During the month of March there were 172 standard household appointments, providing a week's worth of food and other necessities for 521 individuals. There were also 30 emergency food appointments, serving 98 individuals with a 2 day supply of basic food staples.

Your donations are needed and appreciated. Thank you for your continuous support!

May Pantry Requests
Diapers, medium and large sizes
Baby wipes



Calling All Graduates!



It is that time of year again when we like to recognize people who are graduating from high school, college or another course of study. Names of all graduates will be printed in the June *Spire* and the June 3 worship bulletin. Please send names to Andrea in the church office by May 29.

Are you having an Identity Crisis?

A friendly reminder from your new Associate Pastor: In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve, and then God created nametags so he could remember who they are.

I've already learned some of your names but I'd love to learn them all, and as a visual WORD oriented person I remember more easily when I can connect a face with a written name rather than just hearing it spoken.

Also, you may know your name (hopefully) but the person sitting next to you in the pew may not. Wearing our nametags creates a welcoming atmosphere for visitors and newcomers as they learn who we are—and it cuts down on those awkward, "Hi, how are YOU?" exchanges that happen when we see someone every Sunday for a year but we can't remember who they are.

Avoid an identity crisis – claim your name! (and wear your nametag, please).

Blessings,
Pastor Maureen



Come Visit the Library

The reorganization of the church library is now complete. We have approximately 400 titles in the collection, as well as various DVDs. To make it more user-friendly, we've switched from Dewey decimal system to shelving books by category. Besides Bibles and Bible dictionaries, categories include Theology, Spirituality, History/Geography, Other Faiths, Psychology, Men's, Women's, Prayers/Devotions, ONA, Biography/Memoir, Caregiving, Grief and Loss, Fiction, Poetry and a separate section for children's books. Books may be checked out on the honor system: just remove the card from the pocket (or write a new card with info), add your name, and place in the basket on top of the cabinet.



A special thank you to Carol Mento, who generously donated 3 cartons of books while packing up her office—these really made a great addition to our collection. Anyone else who wishes to donate materials may leave items on the counter in the library.

AUCTION

The Congregational Church of Amherst
September 22, 2012
Steve Desmarais, Auctioneer

Donations Needed

Household items, Services,
Vacation Getaways,
Gift Certificates, Antiques
Attic, Cellar, Garage
Items Taking Up Space
Call 673-5075 or 424-9510

Volunteers Will Be Needed

Collecting and Moving Donations,
Providing and Selling
Refreshments and Lunch,
Storage Space Donation Needed

Save September 22 – Save Donations

Proceeds will help support our
ministries to Amherst and the world
and provide meetinghouse care.

\$ From the Treasurer \$

As of March 31, ,012

	March <u>Actual</u>	March <u>Budget</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
Pledge Income	\$31,928	\$27,868	\$104,338	\$93,304
Other Income	<u>5,174</u>	<u>2,365</u>	<u>9,781</u>	<u>7,095</u>
Total	\$37,102	\$30,233	\$114,119	\$100,399
Staff Expenses	\$31,583	\$25,547	\$79,157	\$76,632
Program Expenses	2,285	3,499	7,516	10,485
Other Expenses	<u>8,821</u>	<u>8,381</u>	<u>24,251</u>	<u>25,147</u>
Total	\$42,689	\$37,427	\$110,924	\$112,264
NET	\$(5,587)	\$(7,194)	\$3,195	\$(11,865)

Net cash available less restricted funds = \$(4,415)

Poems, Pastry and Chit-Chat

On Sunday, April 15, our fourth grade students brought trays of sumptuous baked goods to the residents at the Mill Apartments in Milford. The six girls, Cami Whitney, Emma Doherty, Emma Farnham, Eva Bewersdorf, Angelina Boynton and Jenna Spear read two poems from Shel Silverstein and sang two church school songs, *Jesus Loves the Little Children* and *All Night, All Day*. But the best part, according to Resident Service Coordinator, Ellen Kurtz, is the chatting. The men and women who joined us enjoyed hearing about the girls' siblings, sports, school and hobbies. They in turn, shared about adventures with their grandchildren and activities at their apartment complex. A fun and entertaining time was had by all.

Plain White Ts

No, the Sunday school is not in line for a Grammy award. But the children are singing praises to our Lord Jesus by decorating T-shirts on May 20 to wear on Children's Sunday. Historically speaking, this day rocks! The entire church school gathers in the Memorial Garden (or in the community room for inclement weather) and creates wearable works of art. Please pick up one T-shirt per child that you have in the church school. We will decorate and keep them here until they wear them for worship and wear them home on Children's Sunday, June 10. Then they become a wonderful reminder of Christ's love throughout the summer!

Who: Each child in the church school
 What: One new, white T-shirt available very inexpensively at Walmart or Michael's
 Where: Send into the church school teacher at Sunday school
 When: Between now and May 13



A proud Dad, Scott Hewett, listens to his son, Spencer read his special passage from his Bible. Spencer is a member of the third grade and received his own Bible with other classmates last fall. Published by Augsburg Fortress, the *Spark Bible* (NRSV) is accessible to third graders, but will grow with them through grade school years and into confirmation.

Church School Calendar for May and June

May 6

Fourth grade students stay in church to receive communion with their families.
 Regular fun church school classes.
 Teacher Appreciation Reception during coffee hour.

May 13

Mother's Day
 Regular fun church school classes.

May 20

T-shirt Sunday! Don't miss the fun!

May 27

No church school classes.
 Memorial Day holiday weekend.
 Craft activity for children in grades 2 and under.

June 3

Confirmation Sunday
 Regular fun church school classes.

June 10

Children's Sunday
 Ice cream sundaes after worship!

The Congregational Church
11 Church Street
Amherst, NH 03031

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U.S. POSTAGE
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AMHERST, NH



“My grace
is sufficient
for you, for my
power is made
perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV

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