



# The Spire

Congregational Church of Somersville  
United Church of Christ



2021

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
**January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1871 – January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**  
**“Generations of Faithfulness” Psalm 100:5**  
(submitted by Johanna Karbonic, Anniversary Chairman)

This is a tentative schedule for our year of celebration.. If you have any questions, please speak to Rev. Graham Van Keuren, Johanna Karbonic, Ardie Carey, Marj Butler, Genny Farnham, Russ Meyer.

## **January 3, 2021**

- 150<sup>th</sup> Banner will be in front of Church.
- Kick off Service
- Communion
- New Members Service
- Anniversary song -solo
- Music
- the Rev. Charles H. Gates (First Minister of Somersville Congregational Church) will grace the service.
- Dress in 1871 costumes if you are able.

*Because of COVID-19 there will be no new member or 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reception held at this time*

## **February**

- Sunday, February 14, 2021 - Senior Speaker will be Everett Morrill. He will be giving his impression of what church was like when he became a member & what things were like in earlier years.

Unfortunately, we may still be only able to have coffee after the church service.

## **March**

- (No Sunday date set yet)
- Speaker Russ Meyer will talk about Somersville Houses Past & Present

## **April**

- (No Sunday date set yet).. the 4<sup>th</sup> is Easter
- Conference speaker

## **May**

- Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>. Chicken Barbecue done by Genny Farnham's son, Steven Farnham– Congregation to provide meal sides.
- Former minister Gretchen Stanland & Nancy Gowdy Pease will hopefully attend & say a few words about "Days of Old"

## **June**

- (No Sunday date set yet)
- Senior Speaker

## **July**

- Historic Ice Cream Social with a visit from the Rev. Charles H. Gates. Possibly hand cranked ice cream.

## **August**

- (No Sunday date set yet)
- Senior Speaker

## **September**

- 4 Town Float- 1871 Costumed parishioners riding on float drawn by Belgium horses. Banners indicating 150 Anniversary of the Congregational Church of Somersville.

## **October**

- Harvest Potluck Dinner with 1871 Recipes.
- Tim Keeney will give us some historic background as to how the Congregational Church of Somersville and the Somersville Mill intertwined.

## **November**

- No Sunday date set.
- All Saints Day – Music themed celebration Anniversary Choral Piece (Jason & Choir)

## **December**

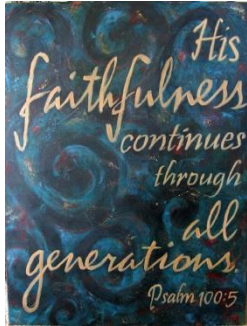
- Anniversary Ending, Time Capsule, Gift to Church.

Our most Senior Members and possible speakers are: Nick Wood – 1947; Everett Morrill - 1950; Nancy Gowdy Pease – 1955; Barbara Abbe – 1959; Mildred Morrill – 1961; Geneva Farnham -1963; George Liberty – 1965; Jack Collins-1966; Mavis Collins-1969; Pat Liberty- 1971; Tim Keeney.

## Pastor's Message

Greetings, Friends in Christ –

It is my great honor to be in ministry with you as The Congregational Church of Somersville (UCC) celebrates 150 years of mission and ministry.



From the faithfulness displayed by our founders, progressing to the faithfulness continuing to be displayed today, surely God has been with our church every step of the way. Our sesquicentennial celebration is a true testimony to the faithfulness of God across the generations as well as the faithfulness of the generations in the church who have gone before us. Our anniversary motto, adapted from Psalm 100:5, is appropriate: we are celebrating “generations of faithfulness.”

This year will be an exciting and busy one for us. We are planning events every month of the year, beginning with an old-timey worship service on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Sunday closest to our actual 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary (which is January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.) The order of worship will be adapted from a typical, mid-late nineteenth century New England Congregational service. Several folks will come dressed in period costume and I will play the role of Reverend Charles Gates, our first pastor. Other months throughout the year will feature activities like special speakers, scrumptious meals, and a fabulous entry in the Four Town Fair parade, among other events. As you know, the coronavirus has cancelled or modified a good number of activities in 2020, and I know that is possible in 2021 as well, especially earlier in the year. However, by exercising thoughtful caution, I am expecting us to proceed with wonderful plans successfully and safely and I hope you will be a part of them. I have gratitude for our past, I take joy in our present, and I pray with great hope for our future. I invite you to join me! Blessings be to you, to the Congregational Church of Somersville (UCC), and to the whole people of God in the new year.

Yours,

*Graham Van Keuren*



## **Annual Meeting**

*Written annual reports from officers and board chairmen are due in to the office by Sunday, January 17.*

Because of the continuing pandemic, this year's annual meeting will be held in the sanctuary immediately following worship on January 31. We will forgo the roll call with scripture response. If you cannot attend worship and/or the meeting in person as we continue to socially distance, the meeting will be broadcast via livestream ([livestream.com/somersvilleucc](https://livestream.com/somersvilleucc)) and on our facebook page.

## **Thanks to ..**

.. Pastor Graham for his leadership, sharing, and caring to the members and friends of this church.

.. all who participated in the December services.

.. those who donated to the 2nd Mile Missions collection to benefit the Christmas Fund.

.. those who assist at Food-share distribution.

.. those who served on boards and committees this past year.

.. those who gave so generously by purchasing and donating gifts requested via the Toy Store for children in town.

.. Eric Elley for his continued support and technical abilities.

.. all those who served as Sunday school teachers!



## **Thanks from ..**

The Board of Missions .. the Board is grateful for the generosity of the congregation in supporting the Town of Somers Toy Shop. Somers Social Services set up this shop for those families with children in need of help to provide presents for the Christmas holiday. We pledged to the town's social services director that we would provide at least 25 gifts for their toy shop but we provided almost double that amount! Way to go!

## **Readers**

1/03 Johanna Karbonic

1/10 Syd Cohen

1/17 JoAnn Supernaugh

1/24 Marj Butler

1/31 Deb Robidoux



## **Christian Education**

### ***Bible Study***

The Wednesday and Thursday morning studies will resume on January 6 and 7 at 9:30 AM. The class lasts about an hour and a half and all are welcome to attend and take part.

### ***Sunday School Update*** (submitted by Lani Bortfeld)

Our current unit on “Jesus brings Good News” focused on Advent in December, beginning with a focus on the words of Isaiah, prophesying the coming of the Messiah and his peaceable kingdom, where the lion will lie down with the lamb. We moved on to the stories of Elizabeth and Mary and then the birth of Christ as told in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. In January the unit on the Good News continues with Jesus’ baptism, calling of his disciples, healing the infirm and teaching through parables.



We’ve decided to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church with a reprise of last January’s Epiphany pageant. Graham and I are still working out the details, but we will livestream the pageant at 11:15am after church and then hope to have some social time on Zoom afterwards. Please check your emails or call the church office for more details on the links to view and participate.

Recently I watched some of that service, which is still available via our livestream account, and it was SO encouraging to see all of us together without masks, with the children doing a great job of presenting the pageant. We are all so tired of this pandemic and how it has cut us off from one another. Our hope is that this will encourage us all to remember where we were and where we will be again, to keep being safe until the vaccine makes it possible to have closer contact again.

We’ve been on Zoom for the month of December, which is not what Marj and I want to do. We would much rather interact with the children up close & personal. However, we are struggling with the limitations of our building: our classrooms and the furniture in them were not designed for social distancing. The large classroom holds from 2 – 4 students plus a teacher socially distanced, and the small classroom only holds one student and a teacher safely. These facts combined with the fact that with the windows open as recommended by the CDC, the classrooms are uncomfortably cold in winter temperatures. Pastor Graham along with Marj and Shirley of the CE Board worked to make the Gowdy Room a clean and suitable place for instruction. This may provide space that allows for good social distancing.

We also struggle with the fact that both Marj and I are in the higher-risk category for COVID. I contacted the Somers Health Dept., which advised us that “Each one of your teachers must assess his or her own risk when required to be in the classroom. If remote teaching is possible – this would be the safest alternative.”

Below is the sequence of stories we’ll read in the *All of Us* youth Bible. Since the curriculum is now completely digital, we are able to use the maps, Bible posters and other supplements, videos, music and other media, to reach children with a variety of learning styles. Please remind your child to have the *All of Us* youth Bible and their magazine - the *Spotlight* for elementary children and the *Quest* for middle school youth – ready when we start church school. This month’s Bible memory passage is:

*Always be glad because of the Lord! I will say it again: Be glad. Always be gentle with others. The Lord will soon be here. Don’t worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel. —Philippians 4:4–7 (CEV)*

Please continue to **check your email each week on Saturday night or Sunday morning for church school updates.**



When we are offering the lesson on Zoom, it’s important to have a variety of faces/voices in the session. You do not have to host the session, just present the lesson or part of it; Lani or Graham will take care of the Zoom details. Currently, Marj and I are the only teachers, so we really would appreciate any kind of help. Just let us know when you can help reading the Bible story or lead a craft. You can sign onto Zoom from your home and read or lead the activity from there - we’ll be glad to do a practice session with you!

The Board continues to check in with families by phone after each CE meeting to update you on upcoming events and catch up with your family’s joys and concerns. Each family has a CE contact person; please let us know suggestions, questions, concerns or prayer requests. Your Board of CE wants to hear from and pray for you in these challenging times. In this way, we hope that we can stay connected in Christ and encourage each other to keep the faith.

Thank you

## Money Matters

### *2021 Budget*

Our Board of Finance did a great job in preparing and presenting the budget for 2021 that was approved at a congregational meeting in December.

### *Financial Statements* (submitted by Patrick Forbes)

This month I will prepare and distribute financial giving statements to members and friends acknowledging receipt of their total giving amount received in 2020. If you don't get a statement or if there is a discrepancy, please speak with me.

### Stewardship Update (submitted by Sharon Miller & Deb Robidoux)

The Stewardship committee would like to thank all those who have made a 2021 pledge so far. As of December 28<sup>th</sup>, we have received 30 pledges totaling \$65,390.

As a reminder, this year's theme from the United Church of Christ is "BELOVED": "Beloved, let us love one another because love is from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7

Remember, if you haven't made a pledge yet, it is not too late. There are additional pledge cards available in the vestibule (Wood Chapel). Your annual pledge would be for the 2021 calendar year, from Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> thru Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>. Your support enables the church to pay its bills and all the services and activities that we value.

This is a very special place to come to for worship services and activities that are so important to all of us. For those who have submitted a pledge card already, you will be receiving a confirmation letter shortly.

**FOR CHURCH RECORDS** Envelope # \_\_\_\_\_ (for office use)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each ☐ week ☐ month ☐ beginning \_\_\_\_\_ (beginning of year)

for an annual total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that this commitment can be changed at any time by giving notice to the appropriate church office:  
☐ I would like to talk with someone about including the church or church-related institution in my will.

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR YOUR RECORDS** Date: \_\_\_\_\_

With others in my congregation, I commit myself to give in proportion to what I have for the ministries of the church and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.

I plan to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ beginning \_\_\_\_\_

Each ☐ week ☐ month ☐ beginning \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**LOVE**

Delivered, let us have one another, because love is from God, everyone who loves in love of God and knows God.

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

A number of people in the church have set up their contributions to be taken electronically on a regular basis. Contributions can be set up as a One Time contribution or on a weekly or monthly basis. The website is

<http://donate.somersvilleucc.org> If you need any assistance, please feel free to speak with Pastor Graham or Sharon Miller.

May God continue to enrich your lives with generosity of grace, love, mercy, peace, joy, hope, and forgiveness. Again, thank you to all who generously support the ministries of our church!

### **Missions Outreach** (submitted by Pastor Graham)

#### ***2nd Mile Mission***

The Missions Outreach Board is pleased to partner with Sole Hope after a four-year hiatus during which we promoted other worthy organizations. Sole Hope provides treatment and prevention of a parasitic sand flea known as a jigger. In East Africa, jiggers infest the feet of those who go barefoot, burrowing underneath their skin and latching onto blood vessels within the foot. Within days, a jigger swells to over 1000 times its size while continuously laying more and more eggs. Jigger infestations cripple adults and children alike. Soon unable to walk, the infested become isolated from school, work, and community. Jigger-infested individuals face further crippling social stigma stemming from the widespread belief that jiggers are a curse and that the infested deserve their suffering. The COVID-19 quarantines in East Africa have helped blunt the spread of the coronavirus, but the relative absence of aid workers (who have returned to their home regions as part of the quarantine) has led to a greater jigger infections than in any year in the last decade. Sole Hope is on the ground working hard to offer hope and healing to those affected.



You may recall that we offered assistance to Sole Hope in the past by cutting out shoe uppers from denim. The uppers were then sent to Uganda where Sole Hope hired craftsmen to cobble shoes together. The shoes were then given to those without shoes to protect their feet. Because of the coronavirus disruptions to clothing recycling, Sole Hope now is in possession of more than enough material for shoe uppers. They really need money to fund mobile mini-clinics that can be packed in the back of a small truck and travel from village to village providing podiatric surgical care. Every \$250 we raise can fund a mini-clinic in a village, changing the lives of those in that community for the better. The Missions Outreach Board challenges the congregation to raise at least \$250 this month to fund one of these clinics. If

you have the desire to see what the clinics do (and you have a strong stomach), you can find many videos online showing the way medical personnel dig jiggers out of the feet of those suffering from them.

The bottom line is that Sole Hope is a Christian medical mission that transforms lives among many of the poorest and most isolated people. Please give generously.



### ***St Pauly's Shed***

The clothing collection shed has been closed due to the pandemic but has recently re-opened. The shed is located in our north parking lot at the green. Accepted items: clothing, shoes, belts, purses, blankets, sheets, curtains, pillowcases, and stuffed animals.

### ***Food Share***

Members of our church help distribute food every other Wednesday from 1-1:30 in the parking lot of the Somers Congregational Church. If you are willing to assist, speak with Marge Morgan. January dates are the 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Church Without Walls***

CWW is an ecumenical ministry with the homeless held each Sunday at Court Square in Springfield. This outdoor service (held in any weather) begins at noon and concludes about 30-40 minutes later with a free lunch to any who would like to partake. Our Board of Missions, with your support, provides lunch (sandwich, snack, and fruit) on the 4th Sunday of each month when Pastor Graham leads the service.

### ***KIVA Update*** (submitted by Linda Longueuil)

During December, we were able to make 2 loans. The first loan went to Alan Javier from Mexico. He will use his loan to pay for comprehensive dental treatment. The second loan went to Nancy from Fiji. She will use her loan to add kerosene and benzene fuel to her canteen business. This brings our total loans to 174. Their stories can be found in the KIVA notebook.

Two loans were repaid in full during December. Fahima from Jordan used her loan to help handle household expenses until her husband could find work. Saad from Palestine used his loan to purchase tools and products he needed for his work.



## **Ladies Aide Activity**

ALL women of the church are invited to attend and participate in the activities of the Ladies Aide Society. The group will next meet at 1 PM on Tuesday, January 12 in the social room. In addition to our regular meeting, officers/committees for 2021 will be elected. If anyone is interested in any position (president, vice president, treasurer, asst. treasurer, secretary, directress, being on the phone committee, or taking a more active role at the Blacksmith Shoppe as a co-chair), please contact the church office at 749-7741, email [somcong@aol.com](mailto:somcong@aol.com), or contact our current president, Ardie Carey.



Because of co-vid, there will be no refreshments served; however, a pot of coffee can be made.

A smaller group of women and men enjoyed socially distanced holiday pot luck lunch in December.

## **Fundraising** (submitted by Ruth Bruch)

### ***Turkey Supper Recap***

I neglected to summarize our turkey supper in the December Spire when I, instead, announced my stepping down as fundraising supper coordinator.

We did, indeed, fill 300 curb-side dinner orders (which was my ultimate goal) and turned away another 148 meal orders. 114 pounds of turkey were donated and we paid out \$441 for an additional 250 pounds. All other ingredients were generously donated. Gross income was \$4,071.02. *Total gross income for fundraising dinners for the year was \$23,563.02!!* That comes mostly from the greater community (folks not members of this church).



Once again, there were so many wonderful compliments coming in from the greater community for the way the meal was done – the smoothness in which the line ran outside, to the personalities and friendliness of those cashiering and delivering bags of meals, to the amount of food served and of course the taste. Folks were so grateful that we continued to offer meals during this time. Again, my heartfelt thanks to all who have assisted and worked with me for any portion, or all, of the past 31 years.



The church would welcome anyone interested in coordinating a single fundraising dinner, or taking on more than one. I have kept records of all dinners in the church office, or you might want to come up with a different menu that's completely new and different. Finance announced at the budget meeting that they would hope to have at least 4 fundraising dinners in 2021.

I would be happy to speak with anyone willing to take on this task.

All committee chairmen whose terms are expiring are asked to turn in his/her key to the church office so it can be reassigned.



## **Seeing COVID's addiction pressures, Conn. church gives people grants to encourage recovery**

by Hans Holznagel | published on Dec 23, 2020

United Church of Christ News

When he interviewed as a candidate at Enfield Congregational United Church of Christ last year, the Rev. Greg Gray was, he said, "very open about my recovery."

Since calling him as pastor last winter, the congregation has made fighting addiction its latest ministry in this northern Connecticut town. Gray's personal knowledge of recovery, plus a generous bequest from a longtime member, are making it possible.

The church is offering up to \$500 to help any Enfield resident enter a verified recovery program at a halfway house, sober house, detox center, rehab hospital or similar institution.

Its Recovery Fund was launched Nov. 1, seeded with \$10,000 – a portion of a bequest left by a recently deceased member. Individuals are also starting to donate to the fund.

It all comes at a time when the effects of addiction are, for some people, heightened by the coronavirus pandemic. The American Medical Association, for example, proclaimed its worry this fall about "reports of increases in opioid and other drug-related overdose and

other concerns” and urged specific actions by state governors and legislators.

### **‘COVID has affected everything’**

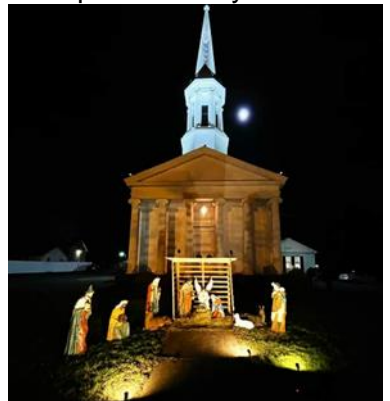
Gray led Sunday worship in Enfield for the first time in March. Four days later, the church, like many, closed its building as a COVID-19 precaution. It has been meeting online ever since.

Launching a new outreach fund in those circumstances has its challenges, Gray said – but those same circumstances are why it’s needed. Isolation, he said, can endanger some people who live with addictions. Specific local statistics can be hard to come by, partly because of the anonymity of recovery programs and the stigma people can feel about reporting addiction.

But Gray – himself in recovery for 15 years and closely connected with the addiction treatment community – knows it’s true.

“COVID has really affected everything,” he said. “As things began to shut down here in New England because of the pandemic, all of the recovery meetings and 12-step meetings were displaced. They adapted fairly rapidly and moved online.

“But for the newcomers, those not already connected with AA or another recovery group – getting them to find a Zoom meeting, rather than be able to walk into a church basement somewhere, was a real problem. Isolation has started just killing people. Just anecdotally, I know the uptick in people dealing with addiction who have died because they didn’t have that kind of support system has been incredible.”<sup>i</sup>



### **‘You have to be seeking recovery’**

People with any kind of addiction can apply by downloading a simple, one-page form from Enfield Congregational’s website and submitting it directly to Gray, who ensures the process is confidential. He then sends an appropriate payment directly to the agency where the person enrolls.

“You have to be seeking recovery,” Gray said. “If you already have 3 months, 6 months, 9 months clean and you need help with your light bill, that’s not what this is for. We cut the check to the facility, not the addict.”

Many factors affect how much \$500 will cover, Gray said. “If you’re going to a state facility, the state’s going to foot the bill for almost everything and the \$500 should cover your expense,” he said. “If you’re going to a privately run rehab facility, then that’s not even a drop in the bucket.

“The other variable is, does the person have insurance? This \$500 could be covering your copay. If your copay is \$250, then we’ll cut a check for \$250 to wherever you’re going. You might be going to a group home like a halfway house, so this might pay first month’s rent.”

### **Postcards at package store**

Word is getting out through the church’s social media channels, news outlets and a decidedly non-digital method: postcards. The local agencies and businesses that are helping to distribute them range from a program serving children and families to places that sell liquor.

“I’m going to put a stack of them next to the cash register at the local package store,” Gray said. “People need to see it who are not reading the newspaper or are not looking at social media.”

The one person the fund has helped so far came as a referral from a local rehab center, which Gray had told about the grants. He hopes to see more applicants as the program gets more publicity, including an article that appeared Dec. 2 in Enfield’s community edition of the Hartford Courant.

“It will take time, because there still is stigma,” Gray said. “For us to get the word out into the community, we have to fight against that stigma, where people don’t want to talk about it.”

### **Addiction can affect anyone**

The Recovery Fund joins a list of ministries run or supported by Enfield Congregational. Local ones including a clothing resale shop, the Enfield Loaves and Fishes food program, a community emergency loan fund, and a ministry to the homeless in nearby Springfield, Mass.

The congregation has embraced the added project partly because addiction can affect anyone, Gray said. “I am willing to say that there is not a family inside the church, outside the church in the community of Enfield or anywhere else that addiction has not touched – husbands, wives, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, somebody. Seeing this as part of the ministry of the church has been a natural outgrowth of who these people are.”

“I believe strongly in community engagement in all forms,” he said. “I think that for a church to be relevant to its community, it has to see the different kinds of demographic groups and reach out to all of them. This is one of those.”

<sup>1</sup> Note from Graham: I give thanks for our 12-Step groups, especially the Beginner’s Group held each Sunday. After weighing the pros and cons, the Beginner’s Group asked to remain in-person in the church building throughout the pandemic. They firmly believe their work with those just starting a path toward sober living could not be effectively performed online. Most other 12-Step groups we host have since returned to in-person meetings, too, though one has chosen to continue to remain online.

## **About our Members and Friends**

### ***January Celebrations***

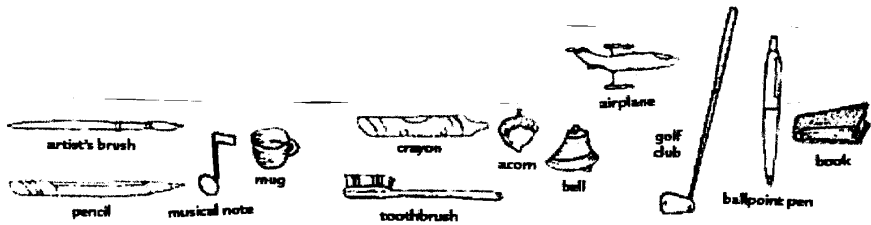
Folks celebrating birthdays this month include: Mae Chillson, Miriam Cohen, Erin Miller, Manny Davis, Chloe Crease, Karen Peck, Judy Peck, Deb Robidoux, Carol Webb and Betty Batchelder.



### ***Condolences***

Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the Atkinson and Gelineau families on the passing of Ron Atkinson on November 25. Ronnie was a member of this church from 1973 – 2004. Pastor Graham officiated at his committal on December.

Hidden Pictures For the Young at Heart - Sledding



**Congregational Church of Somersville**  
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