



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

February 19, 2023

Last Sunday after Epiphany, Transfiguration Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

February 19, 2023

Morning Worship and Children's Programs at 10:00 AM

United Church of Strafford

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Our Church Covenant

*We gather together with freedom of conscience
in a community of love and inquiry.*

All are welcome, without exception.

We practice Christianity with faith and compassion.

*We covenant with one another to embody the love of Christ,
to nurture contemplation and action,
and to offer our gifts, talents and energies as we are able.*

1. "A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning.... Your only role is to be open-eyed and present. Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery.... We do not know their source." 2. "Puhpowee... translates as 'the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight.' As a biologist, I was stunned that such a word existed. The makers of this word understood a world of being, full of unseen energies that animate everything." 3. "The most important thing each of us can know is our unique gift and how to use it in the world." *Robin Wall Kimmerer from Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*

Gathering Music

Carol Rousseau

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude

Blessing and Lighting the Candles

Leader: In Christ was life, and the life was the light of the world.

People: **The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness does not overcome it.**

Leader: Let us pray for peace and the things that make for peace
as we light the peace candle.

Introit "Jubilate Deo"

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from Psalms 50, 104, 36 & 139,
and II Corinthians 4* Herbert Goertz, Reader

Leader: O God, you speak and summon the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

People: Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, you shine forth.

Leader: You are clothed with honor and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.

**People: With you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.**

Leader: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"

**People: Even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

Leader: The gods of this world blind people's minds
and keep them from perceiving the light
shining from the image of God in Christ.

**People: But the God who said,
"Let light shine out of darkness,"
has shone in our hearts
to give the light of the knowledge
of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

***Hymn** MH #103 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

Holy God, "in all life thou livest, the true life of all," and yet we do not see you in all. We do not see you even in our own hearts. Please forgive our spiritual blindness. Sometimes you break through our darkness, giving us glimpses of your presence. Sometimes we see life transfigured—a miraculous coincidence, a birth or a death, a flash of inspiration showing reality in a new light. You give us visions and dreams. But how many have we missed? How many times have we said, "It can't be true"? We go on living our lives as if you were not here every moment. Please open us to the

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transforming power of your presence that is always within and around us, so that your light may shine through us into the shadows of this world.

Silent Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon and Grace

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem Siyahamba South African

Scripture Matthew 17:1-9

Sermon Out of the Perfection of Beauty, You Shine Forth

***Hymn** God's Realm on Earth Is Hidden in Plain Sight
hymn folder

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: Have you experienced anyone or anything transfigured in a way that made you think you were seeing a manifestation of the Spirit or a mysterious force or sacred way? Have you had a spiritual experience that changed you or changed the way you understand life and the world? Has it changed the way you live? If this has not happened for you, has it happened to anyone you know, and how has that affected you?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Benediction**

***Hymn** Halle, Halle, Halle (lu-u-ia)

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Silent Prayer *We invite you to end the service in a spirit of prayer.*

Postlude

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

Please stay for refreshments and neighborliness in the Parish Hall.

Video recorded services, bulletins and newsletters are available on our website unitedchurchofstrafford.com.

See us on **Facebook** at United Church of Strafford

Sign up for **weekly emails** about upcoming worship and other news at unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com

*Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here!*

NEW Covid Precautions at Church The wearing of masks is encouraged but not required. Thank you for helping the church be a safe and healthy place for all! *from The Steering Committee*

Mission Committee Update: Supporting a Strafford GMCC

Camper and Honoring Peggy Thorp On behalf of the church, we are proud to support one Strafford middle schooler who will be attending Green Mountain Conservation Camp this coming summer. This year, our donation was made in honor of Peggy Thorp who oversaw the program for many years and helped to send countless Strafford kids to camp. With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

Heartfulness Contemplative Training Circle gathers on Thursday evenings at 7:00 PM by Zoom and offers an informal meditation all other evenings at 7:30 PM by Zoom. You are invited to be part of the circle anytime. See our website Welcome page for details.

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Video and Resources Available: Understanding Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation Christa Wurm led this interactive workshop in our sanctuary on the afternoon of Sunday, February 5th. She enabled us to use our shared knowledge, curiosity and empathy to better understand the meanings of terms relating to gender and sexual orientation. She helped us explore current data and issues facing young people. The experience was powerful and transformative for many who attended in person and on Zoom. We are making the video available to attendees, church members and friends, along with an extensive list of resources that Christa compiled. Please email the church for the link to the video and resource document.

Fulfilling Our Vision The Fulfilling Our Vision committee is continuing our focus on exploring the question of whether our congregation will become officially Open to and Affirming of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The vision we are fulfilling is our Future Directions Statement that you can find on the pew card or on the Welcome page of our website. For more information please speak with Kate Reimanis or email her at kreimanis@gmail.com.

Fulfilling Our Vision Survey Please fill out and return the survey from the Fulfilling Our Vision Committee to help guide our education and discussion series about differences in sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and how the church and society respond to them. If you are not on the church's mail or email list, you can find a copy of the survey on the table at the back of the sanctuary. Thank you!

Next Concert Admission by donation, 20% goes to the church's Manheim Fund for the Arts. Featuring pianist Annemieke McLane:

Sunday March 5th 4:00 PM "Masterworks"

Friday, May 12th, 7:00 PM

Friday, June 9th, 7:00 PM

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Becoming Nicole
Book Study
March 14, 21, 28, 7:00 PM

Recommended Daily Readings for Lent Lent begins this Wednesday, and next Sunday, February 26th, is the First Sunday in Lent. Martin Smith's book, *A Season for the Spirit: Readings for the Days of Lent* is a spiritual classic, a rich, insightful and useful book. Here is some of what the Norwich Bookstore blurb says about it: "Originally commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1991, *A Season for the Spirit* provides forty daily meditations for Lent, leading us on a journey of discovery in which we find that Christ, through the Spirit, embraces every aspect of our humanity. Each meditation concludes with a prayer and passage of scripture or quotation for further reflection and study." Pastor Tom Kinder says, "I have never found a better companion to take on the Lenten journey. I have read *A Season for the Spirit* year after year and always gained from its wisdom."

Pastoral Care: Pastor Tom Kinder serves only one-third time and counseling, visits, funerals and weddings are not included in his ministry. The church council is developing ways to provide a full range of pastoral care. Those in need can reach out to Deacons through Becky Bailey (rbailey@sover.net), Debby Richie (dc.richie@hotmail.com), and Cameron Speth (cece@speth.com) or call the church number printed on the cover of this bulletin.

Story Sundays! All ages are welcome to join us on "Story Sunday" led by Rachel Guaraldi. Rachel uses stories, as well as song, movement, and shared conversation to help everyone from youngest children to oldest adults explore some of the great spiritual questions. **On March 12**, the stories will revolve around "What does it mean to pray? How do we pray?" Attend in-person or by Zoom.

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

It's muddy out there.
I do my laps on the porch
midst the chickadees.

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The United Church of Strafford and the Morrill Memorial and Harris Library are pleased to announce an upcoming book study for adults and teens. The book, *Becoming Nicole*, tells the story of the Maines family, who are challenged to come to terms with the fact that one of the children is transgender. Written in 2015 by Amy Ellis Nutt, a Pulitzer prize winning science writer, *Becoming Nicole* is a compelling story of the Maines family's journey.

The library is gathering copies of *Becoming Nicole* through interlibrary loan, which should be available soon. The book is also available in paperback at the Norwich Bookstore, or through Amazon. We will divide the reading/discussion into three sessions, with a different focus for each session. Everyone is warmly invited to all three sessions (though of course you can come to fewer if needed).

When: March 14 Chapters 1 - 13
March 21 Chapters 14 - 25
March 28 Chapters 26 - 42

Time: 7:00 - 8:30

Place: United Church Parish Hall (also accessible by zoom)

Please contact Joey Hawkins (joeylornell@gmail.com) for more information, including the Zoom link if needed.

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