



**United Church of Strafford, Vermont**

February 5, 2022

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

*MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal*

February 5, 2022

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

**United Church of Strafford**

230 Justin Morrill Highway

PO Box 124, Strafford, VT 05072

802-765-4585

Email: [unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com](mailto:unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com)

[rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com](mailto:rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com)

Website: [unitedchurchofstrafford.com](http://unitedchurchofstrafford.com)

***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.*

His disciples said, "Show us where you will be so we can seek you." Jesus said to them, "Let those who have ears listen! There is light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world. If it does not shine, it is dark.... If you bring forth what is within you, it will save you; if you do not find and bring forth what is within you, it will destroy you ... I am the light that is within and around all things. I am all: from me all came forth and to me all came and found their being in me. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up a stone, and you will find me there.... The realm of God will not come by watching for it.... Rather, it is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it" *Gospel of Thomas 24, 70, 77 and 113*

**Gathering Music**

The Cantornote Church Musicians

**Silent Prayer of Invocation**

Pastor Tom Kinder

**Prelude** Allemande, Flute Partita in A minor BWV 1013 J.S. Bach

**Blessing and Lighting the Candles**

Leader: In him 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**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

**Responsive Reading** *from Isaiah 58* Danette Harris

Leader: Shout out, do not hold back!  
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!  
Announce to my people their wrongs!

**People: They pride themselves in knowing my laws,  
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness  
and did not forsake the ways of their God.**

Leader: Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,  
and oppress all your workers.

**People: Look, you fast and then turn around and quarrel,  
and strike with a wicked fist.**

Leader: Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to let the oppressed go free?

**People: Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house?**

Leader: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly.  
Your light shall rise in the darkness.

**People: Then you shall cry for help,  
and God will say, Here I am.**

Leader: God will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water that never fails.

**People: Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations  
of many generations; you shall be called  
the repairer of the broken,  
the restorer of towns and of the earth.**

**\*Hymn** PH #444 O Day of God, Draw Nigh

**Children's Time and Lord's Prayer**

**Anthem** "Bright Morning Star Is Rising" arr. J. Althouse

**Scripture** I Corinthians 2:12-16; Matthew 5:13-16

**Sermon** Lighting and Lifting Our Candle

**\*Hymn** The Room Is Dark, It Needs Our Light *hymn folder*

**Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections**

*Reflection Questions:* Our Future Directions Vision says "We intend to be a force, not merely a presence, effecting positive social change for peace, justice and the care of God's creation." Our Fulfilling Our Vision Committee is leading us through a process to consider becoming officially open to and affirming of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. This is a "daring act of love" as the hymn puts it, in courageous pursuit of shining God's light as brightly as we can as a congregation. Even just holding events to explore this topic opens us to attack by those who feel God's love does not extend to all. What is your response to our congregation taking a first public step in this direction this afternoon?

**Time of Prayer**

**Call to Offering**

**\*Benediction**

**\*Hymn** MH #436 The Voice of God Is Calling

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

**Postlude** Sarabande, Flute Partita in A minor BWV 1013 J.S. Bach

**Thank you to The Cantornote Church Musicians,** including Sarah Cantor, Susan Hodges, Donna Isaac, Lorie Ishimatsu and Rachel Kurland!

**Video recorded services, bulletins and newsletters** are available on our website [unitedchurchofstrafford.com](http://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](mailto:unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com)

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

**TODAY: Understanding Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation** Christa Wurm is leading this interactive workshop in our sanctuary this afternoon from 3:30 to 5:30 PM. It will also be streamed on Zoom—email the church address for the link. We will use our shared knowledge, curiosity and empathy to better understand the meanings of terms relating to gender and sexual orientation. We will explore current data and issues facing young people. Attendees will have access to online or paper resources to take home. No prior knowledge is necessary; this is an introduction to these ideas and all that is required is an open mind and willingness to learn. For Christa's bio go to the Welcome Page of our website.

**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*

**Childcare** We welcome children of all ages to the United Church of Strafford! Childcare is available during the church service, provided by teens and adults for children second grade and younger.

**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!

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**Mission Committee Update: Supporting the Rainbow Bridge Community Center in Barre, Vermont** On January 15, we were fortunate to have Jeffrey Tuper-Giles (who is the Vermont United Church of Christ Open & Affirming consultant) join us in church to talk about the O&A process and his own personal journey. To thank and honor Jeffrey, we made a donation to the Rainbow Bridge Community Center in Barre: "The Rainbow Bridge Community Center empowers our LGBTQ+ community by advancing awareness, education and assistance, while building bridges and embracing those who shine all our colors of the rainbow." With love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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

**Next Concert** Admission by donation, 20% goes to the church's Manheim Fund for the Arts. Featuring pianist Annemieke McLane:  
**Sunday February 12<sup>th</sup> 4:00 PM** "With Love"

**Pastoral Care:** Pastor Tom Kinder serves only one-third time. The church council continues to look for ways to provide a full range of pastoral care. Those in need can reach out to Deacons through Becky Bailey ([rbailey@sover.net](mailto:rbailey@sover.net)), Debby Richie ([dc.richie@hotmail.com](mailto:dc.richie@hotmail.com)), and Cameron Speth ([cece@speth.com](mailto:cece@speth.com)) or call the church number printed on the cover of this bulletin.

**Story Sunday February 12th!** Story Sundays are for everyone, children and adults. The service will be led by Rachel Guaraldi.

**Haiku by Mel Goertz:**

Jacket, hat, fresh air,  
sun and walker.

Ten laps on the porch this morning.

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