



March 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.*

***United Church of Strafford, Vermont***

March 19, 2023

Fourth Sunday in Lent

*MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal*

What is a war criminal? Was not war itself a crime against God and humanity, and, therefore, were not all those who sanctioned, engineered and conducted wars, war criminals...? Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty. *Mahatma Gandhi, Non-Violence in Peace and War 1942*

I felt that while war could never be a positive good, it could serve as a negative good by preventing the spread and growth of an evil force... But now I believe that the potential destructiveness of modern weapons totally rules out the possibility of war ever again achieving a negative good. If we assume that mankind has a right to survive then we must find an alternative to war and destruction.

*Martin Luther King, Jr., Strength to Love, 1960*

President Kennedy said on one occasion, "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind." The world must hear this.... It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence. *Martin Luther King Jr. Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution, 1968*

**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

## Welcome and Announcements

## Call to Worship

### Responsive Reading *from Psalm 32* John Echeverria

Leader: Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

**People: While I kept silence, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.**

Leader: Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to God,"  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

**People: Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you;  
at a time of distress,  
the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.**

Leader: You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

**People: I will instruct you  
and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**

Leader: Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
else it will not stay near you.

**People: Many are the torments of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in God.  
Be glad in God, all you upright in heart.**

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

### Prayer of Confession (in unison) *Ojibway Prayer*

Great Spirit, look at our brokenness. We know that in all creation  
only the human family has strayed from the Sacred Way. We know

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that we are the ones who are divided, and we are the ones who must  
come back together to walk in the Sacred Way. Great Spirit, Sacred  
One, teach us love, compassion and honor that we may heal the earth  
and heal each other.

## Assurance of Pardon and Grace

### Children's Time and Lord's Prayer *from Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32*

## Anthem

**Scripture** 2 Corinthians 5:16-20

**Sermon** The Prodigal's Path Home

### \*Hymn Sing

PH #442 Thou Judge by Whom Each Empire Fell *verse 1 only*

PH #447 O God of Love, O King of Peace *verse 1 only*

PH #450 These Things Shall Be *verse 3 only*

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

*Reflection Questions:* Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small  
group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Can you think of any  
situations that one person or one small group transformed, changing  
the world (or at least their part of it)? Have you ever witnessed this  
yourself?

## Time of Prayer

## Call to Offering

### \*Benediction

**\*Hymn** PH #451 Turn Back O Man

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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](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!*

**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*

**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.

**Mission Committee Update: Supporting Radical Self-Love at Rebels of the Moon Summer Camp** We are proud and honored to support Rebels of the Moon summer camp, founded by Strafford's own amazing Katrina Alden. The mission of the camp is "To foster radical self-love through connections to nature, body and community." "Rebels of the Moon welcomes people of all gender identities, male, female, trans, non-binary, genderqueer or non-conforming folks." This summer, Rebels will be hosting four summer camps in Vermont. We are thrilled to support the camp and we are so proud of Katrina, who grew up in our church. With love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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**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](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.

**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](mailto:kreimanis@gmail.com).

**Becoming Nicole Book Study, March 21, 28, 7:00 PM** The United Church of Strafford and the Morrill Memorial and Harris Library are offering a 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 next two sessions are March 21 (Chapters 14 -25) and March 28 Chapters 26-42. We are meeting in our Parish Hall and also over Zoom. Please contact the church for the Zoom link if needed ([unitedchurchinstraafford@gmail.com](mailto:unitedchurchinstraafford@gmail.com))

**LGBTQ+ Circle Conversation, Sunday May 7 after worship** for our congregation to explore how our families and other churches and institutions have responded to the presence of LGBTQ+ people. We will discuss our experiences with those situations and what the impacts were, both positive and negative, on all those involved.

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**Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and the Law: A talk by Rod Smolla, President of the Vermont Law and Graduate School, on April 18, 2023 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM.** Rod will give an overview of the history and evolution of LGBTQ+ rights in constitutional law and civil rights law. He will also give an overview of the most current points of contention, including tensions between the struggle for equality and human dignity for members of the LGBTQ+ community and claims of religious liberty by those who oppose such rights for religious reasons. Following the initial lecture, Rod will lead the group in a town-meeting style open discussion. The event will be in-person, live-streamed on Zoom and recorded and made available.

**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 5<sup>th</sup>. 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.

**Church Calendar:**

Tues. March 21	<i>Becoming Nicole</i> Book Study 7:00 PM*
Thurs. March 23	Heartfulness Circle Zoom 7:00 PM*
Tues. March 28	<i>Becoming Nicole</i> Book Study 7:00 PM*
Fri. March 31	Good Friday viewing of J.S. Bach's <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> on video*
Sun. April 2	Palm/Passion Sunday, Cantornote Music
Sun. April 9	Easter and Special Children's Activities*
Tues. April 18	Rod Smolla: LGBTQ+ and Law 7:00 PM*
Sun. May 7	LGBTQ+ Circle Conversation 11:30 AM*
Sun. May 14	Story Sunday on our Mothering God

\* *there is an announcement about this in this bulletin*

**Next Concert** Admission by donation, 20% goes to the church's Manheim Fund for the Arts. Featuring pianist Annemieke McLane:  
**Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**  
**Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**

**Good Friday Viewing of J.S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion on Video, 6:30 PM Here** We will prayerfully immerse in the powerful experience of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* as our Good Friday service this year. It is considered by many to be among the greatest works of art of all time. It takes us on a long, emotional journey to the cross, over two and a half hours in this version (some are well over three) conducted by one of the leading contemporary Bach scholars, Ton Koopman, and performed by the Amsterdam Baroque Choir and Orchestra.

**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. The next Story Sunday will be May 14<sup>th</sup> with a variation on April 9<sup>th</sup> (see the announcement below for this special Easter version).

**Special Children's Time, Stories and Activities On Easter Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM** As an Easter variation on our monthly Story Sunday, Rachel will lead a special Children's Time early in the service and then the children will go back to the Parish Hall with Rachel, Joey and Danette for more stories, activities, snacks and fun. Parents are welcome to join the children in the back or stay for the rest of the Easter service in the sanctuary.

**Haiku by Herbert A. Goertz:**

Ten inches of snow  
Spring has arrived in Vermont  
We are used to it