



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

March 26, 2023

Fifth Sunday in Lent

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

To set the mind on the materialistic, selfish agenda of the ego is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. *Romans 8:6*

When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.... Jesus began to weep. *John 11:33-35*

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” *John 11:25-26*

March 26, 2023

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

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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.*

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude “Erbarme dich mein Gott,” *St. Matthew Passion* J.S. Bach

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 “Lead Us from Death to Life (The World Peace Prayer)”
Satish Kumar/Marty Haugen

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from Psalm 130* Debby Richie

Leader: Out of the depths I cry to you, O God.
Hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

**People: If you, O God, should mark iniquities,
who could stand?**

Leader: But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

**People: I wait for you, God, my soul waits,
and in your word I hope;**

Leader: My soul waits for God more than those
who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

**People: O Israel, hope in God!
For with God there is steadfast love,
and great power to redeem.
It is God who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.**

***Hymn** The Wilderness Is Dark Tonight *hymn folder*

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

Scripture Ezekiel 37:1-14

Sermon "Can These Bones Live?"

***Hymn** When Peace Like a River (It Is Well) *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: "Can these bones live?" Have you ever seen or felt new life come into a person or relationship or situation that seemed literally or figuratively dead? How did it happen, or what enabled it to happen?

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Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Benediction**

***Hymn** MH #521 I Want Jesus to Walk with Me
The choir will sing the first verse and the congregation will join in for the second and third verses and end with all singing the first verse again.

** 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!*

Good Friday Viewing of J.S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion on Video, April 7th, 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, almost three hours, conducted by one of the leading contemporary Bach scholars, Ton Koopman, and performed by the Amsterdam Baroque Choir and Orchestra. **See page seven for a brief introduction to Bach's St. Matthew Passion.**

Coffee Hour on Easter: Please help! We hope to host a more abundant and special Coffee Hour on Easter, when we expect more families. If you are able to contribute a goodie, please contact Danette or Christina. We thank you in advance! *page three*

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

Becoming Nicole Book Study, March 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 members, who are challenged to come to terms with the fact that one of the children is transgender. The next session is March 28 Chapters 26-42, We hope to meet in our Parish Hall and also over Zoom, but if the mud is bad on back roads we may be on Zoom only. Watch for notifications about it. Please contact the church for the Zoom link if needed (unitedchurchinstraftord@gmail.com)

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.

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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.

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. 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.

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.

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*

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

Friday, May 19th, 7:00 PM

Friday, June 9th, 7:00 PM

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

Special Children’s Time, Stories and Activities On Easter Sunday, April 9th, 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.

Church Calendar:

Tues. March 28	<i>Becoming Nicole</i> Book Study 7:00 PM*
Thurs. March 30	Heartfulness Circle Zoom 7:00 PM*
Sun. April 2	Palm/Passion Sunday, Cantornote Music
Fri. April 7	Good Friday viewing of J.S. Bach’s <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> on video*
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*

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Johann Sebastian Bach wrote his St. Matthew Passion...to present the Passion story in music at Good Friday vesper services. (See page three to read about our viewing of it on April 7th.)

Bach’s Passion continues to move audiences nearly three centuries after it was first heard in St. Thomas’s Church in Leipzig, Germany. Standing as one of the pillars of Western sacred music, it is at once monumental and intimate, deeply sorrowful and powerful.

With gripping drama, Bach’s Passion retells the compelling story of the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. Bach divided the music into two parts. Highlights of the first part include the last supper and the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the second part, the music turns softer and more somber — signaling the inevitability of the story — as it depicts the trial, crucifixion and burial of Jesus. The Passion ends with the darkly textured chorus “In tears of grief...”

Bach built his Passion from choruses both small and large, and arias for specific characters such as Jesus, Judas, Peter and Pontius Pilate. The Evangelist, a role for tenor voice, is the principal storyteller, moving the drama along through a kind of half sung, half spoken recitative. Supporting Bach’s massive structure are three grand choruses — at the beginning, middle and end...

The Passion begins with an immense wave of sound — an opening chorus constructed of an interlocking double choir with a children’s chorus soaring over the top — building with intensity and sweeping the listener into the drama.

“I think the St. Matthew Passion is one of the greatest pieces of music in the Western repertory,” tenor Ian Bostridge says.

From National Public Radio, “A Visitor’s Guide to Bach’s St. Matthew Passion” by Tom Huizenga, April 17, 2014

<https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2014/04/17/298773771/a-visitors-guide-to-bachs-st-matthew-passion>

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

The sight of a bard owl
perched on the railing waiting for prey
wakes me up.

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