



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

April 16, 2023

Second Sunday of Easter

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

April 16, 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.

“Everything had been done to break [Nelson Mandela’s] spirit and to make him hate-filled. In all this the system mercifully failed dismally. He emerged a whole person. Humanly speaking, we would be inclined to say that those twenty-seven years [in prison] were utter shameful waste; just think of all he could have contributed to the good of South Africa and the world. I don’t think so. Those twenty-seven years and all the suffering they entailed were the fires of the furnace that tempered his steel, that removed the dross. Perhaps without that suffering he would have been less able to be as compassionate and as magnanimous as he turned out to be. And that suffering on behalf of others gave him an authority and credibility that can be provided by nothing else in quite the same way.”

Desmond Tutu in No Future Without Forgiveness

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude

Blessing and Lighting the Peace Candle

Pastor Tom Kinder

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 *adapted from Psalm 16* Christina Robinson

Leader: Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
You are my God. I have no good apart from you.

People: **Holy ones can still be found in the land
upholding the law of love.
They are springs of delight in a desert.**

Leader: Those who bow down before the false gods
of selfishness, greed and ambition
create suffering and sorrow in this world.
They sacrifice the blood of the earth
to their own gain.

People: **O God, you are my chosen portion,
I sacrifice all I have to your service.
I place my life in your hands.**

Leader: The boundary lines fall in pleasant places for me—
a goodly heritage in you and in all that is holy.

People: **You give me counsel, O God, and I thank you;
in the night my heart instructs me.**

Leader: I keep you always before me;
because you are at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

People: **Therefore my heart is glad,
and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.**

All: **You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

***Hymn** MH #306 The Strife Is O'er

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem

Scripture John 20:19-31

Sermon Through the Locked Door

***Hymn** MH #311 Now the Green Blade Riseth

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: Have you experienced liberation in your life or seen it in others, as you or they were freed from an inner or outer obstacle or form of oppression? What enabled you or them to break free, and what good came of it?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

*Benediction

***Hymn** PH #188 Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day

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!*

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.

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 in those situations and what the impacts were, both positive and negative, on all those involved. It is a time to listen with open heart and mind; talking is up to you. If you can attend only by Zoom please email us. Hearty refreshments will be provided!

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.

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Congregational Meeting May 21st after worship We will have a Congregational Meeting on May 21st to decide whether to move forward to the next, final steps in our Open and Affirming process. The first step, our educational series, will conclude on May 7th. Here is the plan we approved at Annual Meeting: “Step 2) At the end of the educational series, the congregation votes whether to examine what our church could look like as an Open and Affirming Congregation. This could include holding one or more congregational meetings for reflection, visioning, and discussion. Step 3) At the end of that process, the congregation votes whether to become an Open and Affirming Congregation.” May 21st will be the first of these two votes. If we vote then to move forward to the next phase, part of our exploration would include drafting a proposed Open and Affirming Covenant and Implementation Plan to fit our congregation. Our last vote would be whether to adopt them.

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.

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.

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Upcoming Story Sundays All ages are welcome to join us on “Story Sundays” 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. Attend in-person or by Zoom. Please pass the word about this to anyone who might be interested of any faith or age. Story Sundays are held the second Sunday of the month. The next Story Sundays are May 14th on “Our Mothering God” in honor of Mother's Day and June 11th on the “Gifts of the Spirit.”

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

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!

Church Calendar:

Tues. April 18	Rod Smolla: LGBTQ+ and Law 7:00 PM*
Thurs. April 20	Heartfulness Circle Zoom 7:00 PM*
Sun. May 7	LGBTQ+ Circle Conversation 11:30 AM*
Sun. May 14	Story Sunday on our Mothering God*
Fri. May 19	Annemieke McLane Concert Here 7:00 PM
Sun. May 21	Congregational Meeting after worship*
Fri. June 9	Annemieke McLane Concert Here 7:00 PM

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

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

We eat on the porch.
A gentle breeze. Last year's chives
show a little green.

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Honoring the Passing of the Parsonage into the Care of Others

Last week was the closing of the sale of the parsonage to its new owner. This Sunday we will take the time to express our gratitude to Bob Bushnell, Jim Schley and Glenn Wylie who worked hard over many long hours and months to accomplish this. We will also remember and celebrate all that the parsonage was to this church for generations, including all the pastors who lived in it and all the church activities and classes that took place in it. We will honor all before us who cared for it—countless Trustees over centuries, some of whom we know, most of whom we do not.

Mission Committee News: Help from Strafford Children to Help Others

Recently, the Mission Committee received a heart-warming letter with cash tucked inside from Carmen and Emmett Wurm. The children asked us to “Please take this money that we've been collecting for a while and give it to the people in Turkey that need it..... We want to send you this money because it has love in it and greatness in it and kindness.”

Thank you, Carmen and Emmett! We are so proud of you and grateful! The Mission Committee will add a donation to the children's and will send the money to World Central Kitchen to help feed earthquake victims in Turkey.

Anyone wishing to also add a donation may give Danette cash or a check made out to World Central Kitchen by April 30 or you are welcome to send a check on your own to:

World Central Kitchen
200 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 7th floor
Washington, DC 20001

With grateful hearts and love,
Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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