



April 23, 2023

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
rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com
Website: 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.*

United Church of Strafford, Vermont

April 23, 2023

Third Sunday of Easter, Vision Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” *Proverbs 29:18a*

“We want to find a way to keep what so many value while we re-imagine and re-frame what we can be.... We believe that an inclusive, thoughtful, multi-generational church can be a vital part of life in this community going forward.... Our challenge at this point is to figure out what that looks like.”

United Church of Strafford Profile 2016

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

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.

Welcome

Introit “Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?” R. Gillard

Announcements

*Hymn PH #366 God of Grace and God of Glory

Call to Worship

Silent Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon

***Hymn** MH #114 God of Change and Glory (Many Gifts)

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" K. Medema

Scripture from Psalm 84; Joel 2:17 and Luke 4:14-17
Danette Harris, Reader

Sermon Acts of Creativity, Compassion and Love

***Hymn** Be Thou My Vision *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: Does the Future Directions Vision still seem to match our self-identity, ideals and aspirations as a congregation? What parts stir you or call to your heart as you hear it today? Where do you hope or dream that we will go from here?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Benediction** *Future Directions Vision as a Unison Reading*

***Hymn and Postlude** Halle, Halle, Halle

Halle, halle, halle, lu-u-jah,

Halle, halle, halle, lu-u-jah,

Halle, halle, halle, lu-u-jah,

Hallelujah, halle-lu-jah!

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

Please stay for refreshments and neighborliness in the Parish Hall.

page two

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

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 30th. With grateful hearts and love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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."

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!

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

page three

Circle Conversation on LGBTQ+ Matters, Sunday May 7, 2023

Please join us for hearty refreshments after worship followed by a circle conversation that is open to all members of our church community. This will be a safe space to share our personal experiences and listen with open hearts and minds to our stories about how people who identify as LGBTQ+ (including some of us) have been treated in our families, churches, schools and other communities. Stories might include positive experiences, negative experiences, or tales of moving from negative to positive over time. All experiences and feelings are welcome, and will be held in this circle in confidence. You are welcome to speak or just listen, as the Spirit moves you. If you can attend only by zoom, please email us at unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and the Law: A talk by Rod Smolla, President of the Vermont Law and Graduate

School You can find the video from this dynamic, informative presentation on the Welcome page of our website. You will come away with a better understanding of the conflicting philosophies of law behind the opposing sides on LGBTQ+ related cases, as well as a good idea of the arguments being made by each before the Supreme Court. This gives useful background to many current stories in the media, and many to come.

Video and Resources Available: Understanding Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation

Christa Wurm led this interactive workshop. The experience was powerful and transformative for many. 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.

page four

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, envisioning, 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 and funerals are not included in his ministry. 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.

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

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

What a difference
a day of sun. Coltsfoot blooming
where there were none.

page five