



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

April 30, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday

Earth Day Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

April 30, 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.

“I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, that it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love. I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always toward wholeness, which ultimately is reconciliation and atonement [at-one-ment] with God.” *Wendell Berry, from Another Turn of the Crank*

“The standard of the exploiter is efficiency; the standard of the nurturer is care. The exploiter’s goal is money, profit; the nurturer’s goal is health.” *Wendell Berry, from The Unsettling of America*

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

Unison Reading PH p. 540, #110 *Psalm 23* Rod Smolla, Reader

***Hymn** PH #343 In Heavenly Love Abiding

Silent Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon and Grace

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem

Scripture from I John 3:1-3, 14-19a; from John 10:1-16

Sermon What We Will Be Has Not Yet Been Revealed

***Hymn** If We Take Gifts of Light from Our Creator *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: "What we will be has not yet been revealed," except in glimpses here and there of people who embody the qualities of the Spirit that filled Jesus. That Good Shepherd Spirit created and evolved life, including humans. Are there any people or actions or accomplishments that give you hope that the Spirit is still evolving human consciousness toward the wisdom and oneness earth needs us to attain?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

*Benediction

***Hymn** Pues si vivimos (In All Our Living) *hymn folder*

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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.

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!***

Circle Conversation on LGBTQ+ Matters, Next 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.

Covid Precautions at Church The wearing of masks is encouraged but not required. Thank you for helping the church be a safe place!

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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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 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

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.

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. See our website Welcome page for details. *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.

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. 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 are May 14th: "Our Mothering God" in honor of Mother's Day and June 11th: "Gifts of the Spirit."

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.

Haiku by Herbert A. Goertz:
What promise they hold
The tight buds just emerging—
Summer dwells in them