



July 2, 2023

Morning Worship and Children's Programs at 10:00

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

July 2, 2023

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Independence Day Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“Wrongdoing can be avoided only if those who are not wronged feel the same indignation at it as those who are.” *Solon c640-c556 BC*

“We have no government...capable of contending with human passions, unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge and licentiousness would break the strongest cords.... Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” *John Adams*

Gathering Music

Rolf Pechukas

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude “Ave Maria” Franz Schubert

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 “This Little Light of Mine”

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *adapted from Psalm 16* Christina Robinson

Leader: Protect me, O Spirit, for in you I take refuge.

You are my God. I have no good apart from you.

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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 Spirit of 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 Spirit, 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 O Beautiful for Spacious Skies (alternative) *see page 5*

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem "Bright Morning Stars"

Scripture adapted from Galatians 5:1, 13-14, 16-25, 6:10a

Sermon Called to Freedom

*Hymn MH#519 Lift Every Voice and Sing *verses 1 and 3*
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Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: It is easy to focus on what is wrong, but are there any developments that give you hope for expanding liberation and freedom in America today? What small or large signs of evolution to a better democratic society do you see, more like the realm of compassion, nonviolence, justice, equality, inclusion and love that Jesus called us to help bring to birth?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

Invitation to Holy Communion

Hymn MH #378 Amazing Grace *verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6*

Words of Institution and Prayer of Consecration

Sharing of the Elements *remaining seated*

(All are welcome to this feast of love. We all eat the bread and drink the cup together. We serve gluten-free crackers as well as gluten bread, and we serve juice, not wine, so that all may partake.)

Prayer of Thanksgiving *unison*

We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Please strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and let us show forth your praise in our lives by following the way of Christ with joy. May it be no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us, our truest and best self. Amen

*Benediction

Silent Prayer *We invite you to end the service in a spirit of prayer.*

Postlude Prelude #1 in C Major J.S. Bach

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

Please stay for refreshments and neighborliness in the Parish Hall.

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

Past sermons are available on the back table.

Video recorded services, sermon texts and bulletins
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

Thank you to Rolf Pechukas, our lead musician today!

**Congregational Meeting for Information and Discussion about
Becoming Open and Affirming, July 9th after Refreshments** Our
congregation voted unanimously on May 21st to continue to the next
stage of our Open and Affirming process. Our task now is to explore
what happens when a congregation becomes officially open to and
affirming of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities
and expressions. We will talk about this at a congregational meeting
on Sunday, July 9th after refreshments, looking at what other
congregations have experienced and discussing a draft of what could
become our Open and Affirming Covenant and Implementation Plan.
Copies of the drafts are on the back table and our website.

Sabbatical Time from July 15th to November 15th Pastor Tom
Kinder will be away on sabbatical from July 15 to November 15,
2023. The church council is eager to use this sabbatical experience as
a joyful opportunity—a time of renewal for the church, as well as for
Tom. We propose to use the time to explore “Seeking Spirit,” a
framework for spiritual experience in community that incorporates
both beloved traditional and new elements. For more information,
please see the letter in the back of the sanctuary or on our website.

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O Beautiful for Spacious Skies Introduction and Verses

*Organist Samuel A. Ward wrote the tune MATERNA in 1882
for the popular text, “O Mother Dear, Jerusalem,” which was
written in 16th Century England by F.B.P., very likely a woman. It
later became the tune for “O Beautiful for Spacious Skies (America
the Beautiful).”*

*Katherine Lee Bates first published “America the Beautiful”
in The Congregationalist in 1895, which she first drafted on a trip
west, standing on Pikes Peak. She was an English professor at
Wellesley College where she lived with her beloved Katherine
Coman, also a professor. Bates was a social activist interested in the
struggles of women, workers, people of color, immigrants and poor
people. She advocated the founding of the League of Nations and
considered herself a global citizen. If she were writing today
liberated as a woman, feminist and lesbian, perhaps she would write
something like this:*

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed her grace on thee,
A motherhood that bears new good from sea to shining sea.

O beautiful necessity, strong mother of new ways,
Who nursed a young democracy and raised rights nations praise,
America! America! God's need now calls for more:
To bring to birth a peace-filled earth, with oneness at its core.

How beautiful, those truly free From self and pride and greed,
Who give their life when they can see Another people's need.
America! America! God grant you heart so brave
You place earth's health above your self, Serve, sacrifice and save.

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

Friday, July 28th, 7:00 PM Piano Classics I

Friday, August 25th, 7:00 PM Piano Classics II

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Mission Committee Update: Food, Safety and Climate Refugees

Recently, the Mission Committee has focused on the three areas listed above. We learned that the Sharon Food Shelf was in need of meat and sugar, so we purchased sugar, turkey, hotdogs, chicken and pork and delivered a total of 71.5 pounds of food. We also donated to both Strafford Senior Citizens lunches and Willing Hands. (in Norwich) We are proud to support all three hard-working organizations that feed many of our neighbors.

We also focused on safety, particularly around gender based violence, which feels in line with our Open and Affirming journey. We proudly made donations to both WISE (in Lebanon) and Safeline (in Chelsea). Here is a little bit about both organizations:

WISE's Mission- "WISE leads the Upper Valley to end gender-based violence through survivor-centered advocacy, prevention, education and mobilization for social change." and "It is the policy of WISE to provide educational programs and/or services to victims/survivors of gender-based violence regardless of gender identity/expression/perception, age, health status (including HIV-positive), physical, mental or emotional ability, sexual orientation/identity, socio-economic status, race, national origin, parental responsibility, language, immigration status, or religious or political affiliation."

Here is a statement from Safeline: "While Safeline's mission statement reflects that most domestic violence and sexual abuse is perpetrated against women and children, Safeline serves all victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, including males, those who identify as transgender, and those whose gender identity is fluid."

And, finally, we are pleased to donate to UNICEF, an international organization that focuses on children's welfare. We asked for our donation to be used to help and protect children who are refugees due to climate impact emergencies around the world.

We welcome your ideas for organizations to support! You are welcome to contact any one of us.

With love,

Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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Job Opening for a teen or adult, paid or volunteer, sharing the position of Zoom Master and Recording Engineer. Please speak with Tom or with Glenn or Vin Wylie if you or anyone you know might be interested!

Next Story Sunday 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 (except July). The next is August 13th.

Fulfilling Our Vision The Fulfilling Our Vision committee is working on the question of our becoming officially Open to and Affirming of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and also on the creation of our Native American reparations fund. 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.

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 Becky Bailey (rbailey@sover.net), Debby Richie (dc.richie@hotmail.com, and Cameron Speth (cece@speth.com) or call the church number.

Haiku by Mel Goertz

A newly hatched ant
so tiny—a bit of life
filled with the spirit.

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