



November 19, 2023

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

***United Church of Strafford***

230 Justin Morrill Highway

PO Box 124, Strafford, Vermont 05072

802-765-4585

Email: [unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com](mailto:unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com)

[rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com](mailto:rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com)

Website: [unitedchurchofstrafford.com](http://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***

November 19, 2023

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

*MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal*

“Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I choose joy over despair.... Many Native peoples around the world, despite myriad cultural differences, have this in common—we are rooted in cultures of gratitude.... We are dreaming of a time when the land might give thanks for the people.” *Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Gathering Music**

Rolf Pechukas

**Silent Prayer of Invocation**

Pastor Tom Kinder

**Prelude** “Don’t Stop” Christine McVie/Fleetwood Mac

**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** “Thank U” Alanis Morissette/Glen Ballard

**Welcome**

**\*Reading of Our Open and Affirming Covenant**

**Announcements**

**\*Hymn** PH #462 Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

**Responsive Reading** *adapted from Psalm 95* Christina Robinson

Leader: O come, let us sing to our Creator;  
let us make a joyful noise  
to the rock we turn to  
when lost or in danger.

**People: Let us come into the Creator's presence  
everywhere with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise with songs of praise!**

Leader: For this creative force is the greatest force,  
a great God above all gods.

**People: In its Spirit's hands are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains, also.**

Leader: The sea belongs to the loving one  
who created it, to the holy hands  
that formed the dry land.

**People: O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel humbly before the Spirit  
that sparked life into being and nurtured it,  
that evolved human beings  
and brought us to this time and place.**

**All: For this is our God, our rock,  
our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,  
and we are the people of their pasture,  
the sheep of their hand.**

**Anthem** Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World"  
Bob Theile and George David Weiss

**Scripture** Galatians 5:22, 25-26, 6:6; I Corinthians 12:4-7;  
Acts 2:17-18; 44-47

**Sermon** Listening to the Spirit with Thanksgiving

**\*Hymn** Now Is the Time Approaching *hymn folder*

**Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections**

*Reflection Questions:*

- Where did you find the Spirit that you sought over the past four months?
- Where in the past year did you feel the Spirit was at work creating a world more like God's realm of compassion, justice, peace, oneness and love?
- How has the Spirit led you to feel gratitude, hope or joy?
- What have you gained that you do not want to lose, or what new things would you like to carry forward into the coming year?

**Time of Prayer**

**Call to Offering**

**\*Benediction**

**\* Two Thanksgiving Hymns**

PH #21 We Gather Together *verse 1 only*  
Hymn Folder For the Fruit of All Creation

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

**Postlude** "Higher Ground" Stevie Wonder  
*\* Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

*Please stay for refreshments and neighborliness in the Parish Hall.*

**Past sermons** are available on the back table.

**Video recorded services, sermon texts and bulletins**  
are available on our website [unitedchurchofstrafford.com](http://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](mailto:unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com)

*We are an Open and Affirming Congregation.  
Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here!*

**Conversation with the Pastor after Refreshments** Pastor Tom Kinder is eager to catch up with you after four months of sabbatical separation, so he invites you to stay after refreshments for conversation on any of his first three Sundays back, November 19th and 26th and December 3rd. The circle conversation will focus on what these months have been like for you, both personally and as a church, and where you have found the Spirit you sought, and what new things you hope to carry forward, and what old things you hope to continue or bring back.

**The 2023 Lord's Acre Auction** is now up and running! It will be open for bidding until noon on November 26. Thanks to all the donors who stepped up with wonderful offerings, and thanks in advance to folks who can now do holiday shopping that benefits our beloved church! The link to see the items and place your bids is: <https://www.biddingowl.com/UnitedChurchofStrafford>  
Thank you to the Lord's Acre team: Ingrid Webb; June Solsaa; Danette Harris; and, Joey Hawkins!

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

**Daily Meditation Sessions** Our Heartfulness Circle offers an informal meditation gathering on Zoom every evening from 7:30 to 8:10 PM. See our website Welcome page for the Zoom link and more details.

**Pastoral Care:** Those in need can reach out to Deacons Becky Bailey ([rbailey@sover.net](mailto:rbailey@sover.net)), Debby Richie ([dc.richie@hotmail.com](mailto:dc.richie@hotmail.com)), and Cameron Speth ([cece@speth.com](mailto:cece@speth.com)) or call the church number.

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### **Mission Committee Update: Toys for Children in Ukraine**

This month, the Mission Committee made a donation to send toys to children in Ukraine who have been displaced by the war. Toys and donations are being collected by Bethany Church in Randolph, Vermont. We are honored to help their mission to once again collect toys for children in their Sister City, Myrhorod, Ukraine. Last year, they collected 1500 toys. 6000 children displaced by the war are now living in Myrhorod. 4,395 of those children are under the age of twelve. You can donate money yourself that will be sent directly to the Rotary and Municipality of Myrhorod. Checks can be made out to Bethany Church and marked Ukraine. Please send it to the Bethany Church, 30 North Main Street, Randolph, Vermont 05060. Feel free to contact any one of us if you have ideas for mission work. With love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

**Advent Begins November 26<sup>th</sup>!** Advent is about waiting and preparing in the darkness for the coming light. It is a season of great beauty from the first notes of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" to the last verse of Silent Night, from the lighting of the candle of Hope to the candles we carry out on Christmas Eve. Our services will be full of beloved traditional rituals, stories and songs and will also look at Advent anew through the lens of "Seeking Spirit." Advent is about the coming birth of a Spirit-filled New Human and New Humanity, but there were many babies born under that star over Palestine, and today many voices invite us into very different ways of being human, even within one spiritual tradition. Advent calls us to discern the light that shines in the darkness, and trains us in the ways of discernment. We will use Advent to help us discern the path the Spirit is calling us to take in order to help humanity evolve to save what is now endangered and build the realm of God's love on earth.

**Next Concerts** Held on Fridays (except where noted), 7:00-8:15 PM. Admission by donation, 20% goes to the church's Manheim Fund for the Arts.

**December 15** Noel Concert with Annemieke McLane, Jeremiah McLane, Julie Ness and Tim Cummings

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**Advent, Christmas & Epiphany Services & Events Calendar**

**Sun. Nov. 26 First Sunday of Advent** The candle of Hope, and Bringing in the Greens; Special Cantornote Church Musicians ensemble.

**Sun. Dec. 3 Second Sunday of Advent** The candle of Peace; pianist and choir director, Annemieke McLane

**Sun. Dec. 10 Third Sunday of Advent and Pageant Sunday**  
During the 10:00 AM service Rachel Guaraldi will present a puppet pageant with an opportunity for children to participate and for the congregation to sing carols. Afterward, Tom will lead a brief Advent service and we will light the candle of Joy.

**Fri. Dec. 15, 7:00 PM Noel Concert** here with Annemieke McLane, Jeremiah McLane, Julie Ness and Tim Cummings

**Sun. Dec. 17 Fourth Sunday of Advent, Mary Sunday**  
Lighting the candle of Love and celebrating Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the model she serves for our spiritual lives; Cantornote Church Musicians

**Sun. Dec. 24 NO 10:00 AM Service**

**Sun. Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service 5:30 PM**

Picture excited and awe-filled children, a sanctuary lit entirely by candles, beloved lessons and carols and gorgeous instrumental and choral music provided by Annemieke McLane, our choir and friends, in a service timed to allow you to have all your other Christmas Eve traditions as well.

**Sun. Dec. 31 Sunday after Christmas, 10:00 AM Zoom-only gathering** to read aloud a beloved Christmas story for all ages, hear some beautiful music, share our joys, concerns, prayer requests and reflections and say Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to one another.

**Sun. Jan. 7 Epiphany Sunday** The Magi follow the star...

**Sun. Jan. 14 Story Sunday and Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday**

***Open and Affirming Covenant***

*Adopted unanimously at Annual Meeting  
on September 17, 2023  
after a well-informed, careful process  
open to our entire church family.*

We, the members of the United Church of Strafford, Vermont, regard all people as beloved children of God. We give thanks for the many and diverse gifts of God among us.

We declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation. We welcome and accept into full participation, membership and leadership, people of every sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, faith background, political affiliation, age, marital status and family structure, physical or mental abilities, education and economic status. We acknowledge with humility that this list is not exhaustive and that the terms are in some cases harmful and evolving social constructs. We honor the worth and dignity of all people. We affirm all relationships founded on the principles of love, justice, the Golden Rule and treating others as they wish to be treated.

We commit ourselves to integrate the spirit of this covenant into all aspects of our church life. We pledge to work to end oppression, discrimination and hateful behaviors whenever we encounter them, and, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to help create the beloved community of God's realm on earth.

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

**Haiku by Mel Goertz**

I sing my thanks  
for food so good, for friends who love,  
for field and woods.