



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

November 26, 2023

First Sunday of Advent, Sunday of Hope

Bringing in the Greens

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

November 26, 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.

“As I let my eyes look deeply into my own heart and yours, I am increasingly aware of how lost we are... We have to know the darkness to be able to search for the light. We first must come to know our lostness if we want to find meaning, purpose and direction in life. What I want to share with you is a way out of the darkness, a way to find the light.... Divine guidance can be found in the books we read, the nature we enjoy, the people we meet, and the events we experience. Through the practice of discernment, we can ...open our hearts to the divine presence. We can discover who we really are. And we can ascertain when to act, when to wait, and when to be led. Spiritual discernment is an ancient Christian practice with many wells of wisdom from which to drink.” *Henri Nouwen, from Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*

Gathering Music

The Cantornote Church Musicians

Nun kommt der heiden heiland: M. Praetorius, JS Bach, WF Bach

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude “Veni Emmanuel”

Welcome

Bringing in the Greens

Hymn PH #110 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel *verses 1 & 2*

Bringing in the Holly and Poinsettias

Hymn PH #110 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel *verses 3 & 4*

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Bringing in and Blessing the Light

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.**

Lighting of the First Advent Candle Rod and Anja Smolla

Please see your pew card for the Lord's Prayer. We are reading the New Version this week.

Anthem "Veni Redemptor Gentium (Come, redeemer of the earth)"
Ambrose of Milan (4th Cent.)/Michael Praetorius (16th-17th Cent.)

Announcements

Confession and Assurance of Pardon

Scripture Readings Romans 12:1-2, 13:11-12;
Mark 13:28-29, 33-37

Sermon Discerning the Spirit's Path of Hope for Humanity

***Hymn** PH #108 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying
verses 1 & 2 only, plus verse 3 found on bulletin page 4

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

What candles of hope do you see now, near or far? What candles of hope can we hold up for others? What steps ahead do you see on the Spirit's path of hope for humanity?

Time of Prayer

Congregational Benediction

Go Forth to Wait and Watch and Pray *(on page 4)*

Silent Prayer

Please be seated to end the service in a spirit of prayer

Postlude Wachet Auf

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

Past sermons are available on the back table
and **video recorded services** are on our website.

See us on **Facebook** at United Church of Strafford

Look for updates on our **website**: unitedchurchofstrafford.com
Sign up for **weekly emails** about upcoming worship and other news
at unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com

Thank you to the The Cantornote Church Musicians, including Sarah Cantor, Edward Cipullo, Susan Hodges, Michael Lauer, Sara Lisniansky, Bonnie Hohanna Ross, Anthony Sheppard, Brian Warnock!

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 November 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.

Daily Meditation Sessions Our Heartfulness Circle offers an informal meditation gathering on Zoom every evening from 7:30 to 8:10 PM. On Thursdays we have an extended session starting at 7:00 PM. See our website Welcome page for the Zoom link and details.

Pastoral Care: 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.

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Wake, Awake for Night Is Flying (PH#108)

Verse 3:

Though deep darkness may surround you
And sleep, or worldly dreams, confound you,
This hope can lead you through the night.
See its single candle burning
Within the window of your yearning
And choose your heart's path by that sight.
Leave other hopes behind
As this light fills your mind:
Christ born in you.
Sing out your choice with longing voice:
O come, O come! Rejoice! Rejoice!

ADVENT

Go Forth to Wait and Watch and Pray

Thomas Cary Kinder, 2009, 2015



Go forth to wait and watch and pray. Hope is it - self the
De - part, and in the dark pre - pare. Let go what feels too



light - ed way, A door that o - pens in the night,
much to bear, And, blessed by Ad - vent's nar - rowed scope



A can - dle fill - ing all our sight.
Find light to share: a star of hope.

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

Advent, the time when birds
come back to your feeder
bringing light with them.

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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 Noël 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

Next Concert Held on Fridays, 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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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 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.

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!

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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.

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