



December 3, 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

December 3, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent, Sunday of Peace

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“Certain events...serve as signposts pointing to the will of God and the new creation for those with eyes to see and ears to hear.... In every critical event, there is an opportunity for God to act creatively and reveal a deeper truth than what we see on the surface of things. God also can turn around critical incidents and seemingly hopeless situations in our lives and reveal light in darkness.... **How might we stand aside from all our demands and desires in this age of consumerism and militarism and seek peace within, peace for our immediate community and peace in the world?** When millions of people experience the same event or series of critical events in the world, these events become...occasions to discern the signs of the times.... I can see no other way for discernment than a life in the Spirit, a life of unceasing prayer and contemplation, a life of deep communion with the Spirit of God. Such a life will slowly develop in us an inner sensitivity....” *Henry Nouwen from Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*

Gathering Music

Annemieke McLane

Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” *PH #110 v. 4 only*

O come, Desire of Nations, bind

All peoples in one heart and mind.

Bid envy, strife and warfare cease.

Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee O Israel!

Prelude Allemande, French Suite II J.S. Bach

Welcome

Introit *Israeli and Palestinian: Vine and Fig Tree & Ya Rab as-salami (God of peace and justice) arr. Johh Bell*

Announcements and Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *adapted from Luke 1, the Benedictus of Zechariah, at the birth of his son, John the Baptist* Herbert Goertz

Leader: “Blessed is the Spirit of the Universe,
that looked favorably on the earth and its people
and redeemed them.

**People: The Spirit evolved a powerful source of salvation for us
in the house of its servant David,
as was foretold through the mouth
of holy prophets from of old,**

Leader: that we would be saved from evil ways
and from violence at the hand of all who hate.

**People: The Spirit has shown the mercy
promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered our holy covenant,
the oath our ancestor Abraham heard God make,**

Leader: to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of evil,
might serve God without fear,
in holiness and righteousness all our days.

**People: And you, child, will be called
the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the living source of our hope
to prepare the way,
to give knowledge of salvation to all people
by the forgiveness of their wrongs.**

Leader: By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,

**People: to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”**

***Hymn** PH #104 Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

Lighting of the Second Advent Candle

Members of the Mission and Fulfilling Our Vision Committees
*Please see your pew card for the Lord’s Prayer. We will read the
New Version at the end.*

Anthem “Be a Candle of Hope” Becki Slagle Mayo

Scripture Isaiah 40:1-5, 10-11; Mark 1:1-8

Sermon Discerning What “Prince of Peace” We Hope Will Come

***Hymn** MH #196 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus *verse 1 only*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Where or when do you experience peace in your life? What do you
do to help others experience peace? What more can we as a church
do to promote peace in our congregation and community?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

Invitation to Holy Communion

Hymn The Light Is in the Summer Sun *hymn folder*

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.)*

Communion music: “Tshollela moya wa hao, Jesu” Sotho

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

*Congregational Sung Benediction

May All Your Restlessness Find Rest (*on page 5*)

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

Postlude Waltz, Opus 39 No. 3 J. Brahms

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

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

Thank you and welcome back to Annemieke McLane!

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 today. 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.

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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Past sermons are available on the back table and **service video recordings and texts** are on our website.

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

Look for updates on our **website**: unitedchurchofstrafford.com

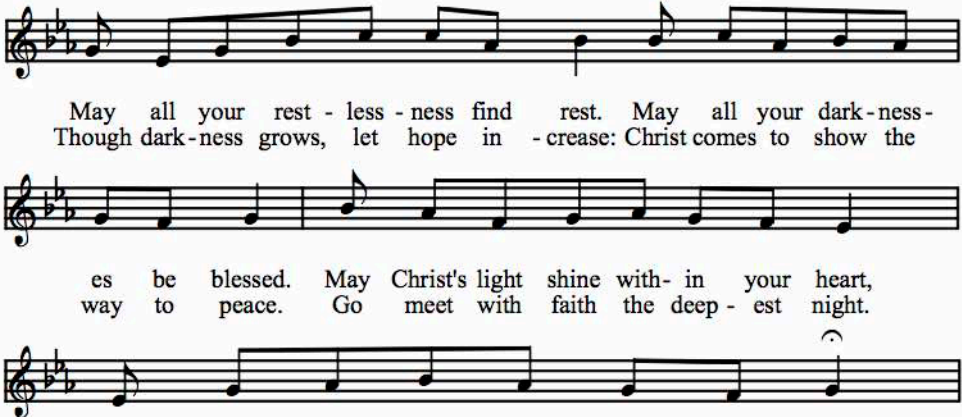
Sign up for **weekly emails** about upcoming worship and other news at unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com

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.

ADVENT

May All Your Restlessness Find Rest

text: Thomas Cary Kinder, 2008, 2015
tune: CONDITOR ALME., L.M., Sarum Plainsong



May all your rest - less - ness find rest. May all your dark - ness -
Though dark - ness grows, let hope in - crease: Christ comes to show the

es be blessed. May Christ's light shine with - in your heart,
way to peace. Go meet with faith the deep - est night.

A love that binds us though we part.
Go forth as bear - ers of Christ's light.

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Advent, Christmas & Epiphany Services & Events Calendar

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: Medical Care and Food for Our Brothers and Sisters in War Zones

On behalf of our church, the Mission Committee is honored to donate to two hard-working organizations who are lovingly caring for people around the world who are trying to survive in war zones. Doctors Without Borders is providing medical care for those in need and World Central Kitchen is serving hot meals. Bless their hard, compassionate work. Please let one of us know if you have other ideas for mission work. With love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

Mission Committee Update II: Toys for Children in Ukraine

This month, the Mission Committee also made a donation to send toys to children in Ukraine who have been displaced by the war.

Fulfilling Our Vision Committee Update: You can find the Future Directions Vision we are working to fulfill printed on the pew card. Our Native American Reparations Fund has been established, with a generous start-up donation from a member of our congregation. If you would like to contribute, please make your donation to The United Church of Strafford and indicate "Reparations." We are exploring various ways to use this fund. Our first intent is to support Abenaki needs and wishes here in Vermont. We will provide periodic updates, although confidentiality will be needed in some cases, as with the Deacons Fund. We are also working to fulfill the Implementation Plan for our Open and Affirming Covenant. You can find the link to both the covenant and the plan near the top of the Welcome Page of our website. Keep your eyes and ears open for welcoming language, fresh signs, community building, and active kindness in our church space and beyond! FOV meetings will resume the first Tuesday evening of every month, beginning in February. Please contact Kate Reimanis with any questions or ideas.

Haiku by Herbert A. Goertz:

Peace restores the soul
Like a steady gentle rain
Makes barren land whole.

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