



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

January 14, 2024

Second Sunday after Epiphany, Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

January 14, 2024

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.*

“Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” *Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

“This is a time not to sit out but instead to re-engage. We appeal to Americans to set aside their political differences, grievances and party affiliations and to contemplate—as families, as parishes...and as individuals—the real magnitude of the choice they will make in November.” *The New York Times Editorial Board, January 6, 2024*

“There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or...Self-Interest... The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done.... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.” *Frederick Buechner, Wishful Thinking*

Here is the test to find whether your mission on Earth is finished: if you're alive, it isn't. *Richard Bach*

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Call to Worship *from Isaiah 49 and MLK, Jr.* Debby Richie

Leader: Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention,
you peoples from far away!
The Spirit of God called me before I was born.
It made my mouth like a sharp sword,
in the shadow of its hand it hid me.

People: **And it said to me, “You are my servant, Israel,
in whom I will be glorified.”
But I said, “I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with my God.”**

Leader: And now the Spirit says, “It is too light a thing
that you should be my servant to raise up
the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

People: **This hour of history needs a dedicated circle
of transformed nonconformists.
Our planet teeters on the brink of annihilation.
We as Christians have a mandate
to be nonconformists.**

Leader: I do not minimize the complexity
of the problems that need to be faced....
But I am convinced that we shall not have
the will, the courage and the insight
to deal with such matters unless...
we are prepared to undergo a mental and spiritual
reevaluation, a change of focus.

People: **Only through an inner spiritual transformation
do we gain the strength to fight vigorously
the evils of the world
in a humble and loving spirit.**

All: **Now let us begin.
Now let us rededicate ourselves
to the long and bitter—but beautiful—
struggle for a new world.
This is the calling of the children of God.**

page two

***Hymn** MH #474 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

*from “Letter from Birmingham City Jail”
by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ.
But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body
through social neglect and fear of being nonconformists.
There was a time when the church was very powerful.
It was during that period when the early Christians
rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer
for what they believed. In those days the church was
not merely a thermometer that recorded
the ideas and principles of popular opinion;
it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society....
Things are different now. The contemporary church is often
a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound...
If the church of today does not recapture
the sacrificial spirit of the early church,
it will lose its authentic ring,
forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed
as an irrelevant social club with no meaning.

Silent Prayer

Assurance of Pardon and Grace

Anthem “Halleljah Pelo Tsa Rona” South African Freedom Song

Scripture 1 Samuel 3:1-10; Matthew 9:35-38

Sermon “Speak, for Your Servant Is Listening”

***Hymn** PH #441 Once to Every Heart and Nation

page three

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

How you ever felt a calling in your life to use your gifts to serve the world in some way? If so, looking back on it, what did you learn about discerning and responding to a calling? What difference did your response to your calling make?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** Thuma Mina *hymn folder*

Mission Moment Scot Zens

Benediction The words and voice of MLK Jr.
(see “A Committed Life” on page seven)

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

Postlude

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

page three

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

Story Sundays Continue Rachel Guaraldi leads worship for children and all ages, usually on the second Sunday of each month. The services focus on a big question or theme that they explore through stories, songs and reflections. The next Story Sunday will be the third Sunday this month, January 21st.

page four

Welcome Scot Zens Scot is joining us to talk about a march and rally in Montpelier starting at City Hall at 1:00 PM on Saturday, January 27th and marching to the Statehouse. The title of the event is “Vermonters Together: Building a Better Future.” It will call on the state’s decision-makers to address current economic, social and environmental injustice for the sake of the next generation, and create a more equitable and healthy economy in balance with our planet. It will urge decision-makers to embrace new solutions that drive investments in our communities, farmers and our land, provide safe, warm and affordable housing, and give all Vermonters access to 100% low-emissions income-assessed energy. Talk with Scot after today’s service or email mscotzens@gmail.com with questions. Scot and his wife, Vanessa Rule, live on Alger Brook Road. Scot is a long time Deacon of the Thetford Hill Church.

Update from the Mission Committee: Supporting Our Youth in Strafford and Across the Country and Central America Recently, we were in contact with Josh Potter about supporting one or two Strafford campers for this summer’s Green Mountain Conservation Camp. Also, on behalf of the church, we supported Covenant House whose mission is to “continue to fight human trafficking and relentlessly support young people facing homelessness. We’re committed to helping young people get back on their feet and onto their next chapters.” Their many shelters across the US and also in Central America work “to provide safe housing and holistic care to youth ages 16–21 experiencing homelessness and survivors of human trafficking.” Please let any one of us know if you have ideas for mission work. With gratitude and love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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.

Childcare We welcome children of all ages to the United Church of Strafford! Childcare is available during the church service for children second grade and younger.

page five

A Committed Life

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.

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.

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

Sunday afternoons at 4:00 PM:

January 21 “Healing Powers of Music”

February 4 ”All Bach”

March 17 “French Connections”

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

There’s a mourning dove
waiting her turn while a blue jay
pecks at the corn.

If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don’t want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize—that isn’t important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards—that’s not important. Tell them not to mention where I went to school.

I’d like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I’d like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.

Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. I won’t have any money to leave behind. I won’t have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind.

*From “The Drum Major Instinct,” a sermon preached
by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
at Ebenezer Baptist Church on February 4, 1968*

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