



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

February 18, 2024

First Sunday in Lent

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

February 18, 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.*

“Human consciousness does not emerge at any depth except through struggling with your shadow.... It is in facing your conflicts, criticisms, and contradictions that you grow up. You actually need to have some problems, enemies, and faults! You will remain largely unconscious as a human being until issues come into your life that you cannot fix or control and something challenges you at your present level of development, forcing you to expand and deepen. It is in the struggle with our shadow self, with failure, or with wounding, that we break into higher levels of consciousness.” *Richard Rohr*

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Introit “Nearer My God to Thee”

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.

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from Psalms 25 & 91* Herbert Goertz

Leader: To you, O God, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I trust.

People: Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.

Leader: Be mindful of your mercy, O God,
and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

People: Do not remember the sins of my youth
or my transgressions.

Leader: You lead the humble in what is right,
and teach the humble your way.

People: Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.

Leader: Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.

People: All you who wander in a wilderness,
trust that God will send angels
to help you in all your ways.

Leader: On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

People: God says, "Those who love me, I will deliver;
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
and show them my salvation."
In you, O God, I trust.

*Hymn PH #148 Forty Days and Forty Nights

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

Holy God, we confess that we do not want
to follow Jesus into the wilderness.

We are afraid to face the temptations and chaos
that we think will overwhelm us if
we leave the realm of our own control,
even though we are not truly in control now.

We are afraid of change, even when change is needed.

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We hear your call to let go, to follow the path of faith,
and to trust that your steadfast love
will guide and protect us.

Forgive our reluctance to respond.

Please send your Spirit upon us.

May it drive us into the wilderness
of emptying and letting go.

May not our will, but thy will be done.

May Christ give us courage for our Lenten trials,
confronting the shadow of our false self

so our true self may emerge into your Easter light.

Silent Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon and Grace

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer *from Matthew 4 and Luke 4*

Anthem "Just a Closer Walk with Thee"

Scripture Mark 1:9-15

Sermon God Teaches the Humble the Way

*Hymn God, This Wilderness Seems Trackless *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Have you experienced a time in your life that was particularly hard,
where you felt lost in something like a trackless, lightless
wilderness? If so, what got you through that time? What angels or
unexpected paths did you find along the way? Looking back, what
gifts came to you because of that wilderness journey?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

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***Hymn** MH #521 I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

***Benediction**

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

Postlude “Nearer My God to Thee”

** 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!*

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

New Members Group If you are interested in becoming an official member of this congregation, please speak with Pastor Tom Kinder. The process involves reflecting on your spiritual journey and learning about the history, structure and mission of this church.

Story Sundays Update Rachel Guaraldi is taking a break from offering Story Sundays. We are considering what we will do in the coming months to provide programming for children and young families. If you have suggestions or would like to be involved, please be in touch with Joey Hawkins or Danette Harris. Thank you!

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Mission Committee Update: Supporting Strafford Senior Lunch

On behalf of the church, we are proud and happy to again support the Strafford Senior Lunch that is served at Barrett Hall on Wednesdays. We delight in the fact that it not only serves up a delicious meal to so many but also that there is a big helping of community fellowship. We honor and thank all of those who plan, cook and serve the meal. Please let one of us know if you have any ideas for mission work. With love and gratitude, 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.

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 afternoon at 4:00 PM:

March 17 “French Connections”

Friday evening at 7:00 PM:

April 5th, with poet, Jim Schley

May 10th, with Jeremiah McLane

June 21 “Summertime”

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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.

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

Our extended family—
birds and baby squirrels
who come here to feed.

Church Calendar:

Sun. Feb. 18	First Sunday in Lent
Thurs. Feb. 22	Heartfulness Circle Zoom 7:00 PM*
Sun. Feb. 25	Community Nurse Meet and Greet here*
Tues. March 5	Fulfilling Our Vision meeting 7:00 PM*
Sun. March 17	Annemieke, "French Connections" 4:00 PM*
Sun. March 24	Palm/Passion Sunday
Fri. March 29	Good Friday
Sun. March 31	Easter

** there is an announcement about this on this insert*

Community Nurse Meet and Greet February 25th after Worship

Community Nurse, Sheila Keating, will join us in the Parish Hall for a "meet and greet" time on Sunday, February 25th. Please spread the word. The entire community is invited. She plans to be here from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

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. Please contact Kate Reimanis with any questions or ideas.