



February 25, 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.

United Church of Strafford, Vermont

February 25, 2024

Second Sunday in Lent

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and their action becomes all-pervasive in its effect. This comes when they reduce themselves to zero.” *Mahatma Gandhi, alt.*

“‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth....’ It is the quality of being emptied of selfishness which enables one to be filled with the power of God and thereby remain invincible in spirit.”

Hieromonk Damascene

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Introit “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” Ken Medema

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 Psalm 22

Christina Robinson

Leader: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?

People: **O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.**

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Leader: Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of the saints.
In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
To you they cried, and were saved.

**People: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.**

Leader: From the horns of the wild oxen you rescued me.
In the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

**People: For you did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
you did not hide your face from me,
but heard when I cried to you.**

Leader: The poor shall eat and be satisfied.
Those who seek God shall praise God.
May their hearts live forever!

**People: All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to you, O God,
and we shall live for you.**

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

Children's Time and Lord's Prayer

Anthem "My Life Flows on in Endless Song" American Folk

Scripture Mark 8:31-9:1

Sermon The Grief That Makes for Joy

***Hymn** Oh, Pity Peter, Who Held On *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 wilderness or dark night of soul? If so, what got you through that time? What unexpected angels or signs helped you along the way? Looking back, what gifts came to you because of that wilderness journey? *page two*

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** PH #232 Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

***Benediction**

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

Postlude "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" Ken Medema

** 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”

Haiku by Herbert A Goertz:
The apples are gone
But the full moon hangs yellow
In the bare branches

Church Calendar:

Sun. Feb. 25 Second Sunday in Lent
 Community Nurse Meet and Greet here*
Thurs. Feb. 29 Heartfulness Circle Zoom 7:00 PM*
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 this 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.