



United Church of Strafford, Vermont

March 10, 2024

Fourth Sunday in Lent

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

March 10, 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.*

“Contemplative prayer is a process of interior transformation... leading, if we consent, to divine union. One's way of seeing reality changes in this process. A restructuring of consciousness takes place which empowers one to perceive, relate and respond to everyday life with increasing sensitivity to the divine presence in, through and beyond everything that happens.”

Thomas Keating, Open Mind, Open Heart

Gathering Music

Rolf Pechukas

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Introit “Show Me the Way” Peter Frampton

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 107* Rod Smolla, Reader

Leader: O give thanks to God, for God is good;
God's steadfast love endures forever.

People: **Let the redeemed say so,
those God redeemed from trouble.**

Leader: Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way;
hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

People: **Then they cried to God in their trouble,
and God delivered them from their distress;
God led them by a straight way.**

Leader: Let them give thanks for God's steadfast love,
for God satisfies the thirsty,
and fills the hungry with good things.

People: **Some were sick through their wrongful ways,
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;**

Leader: Then they cried to God in their trouble,
and God saved them from their distress;

People: **God sent out the word and healed them,
and delivered them from destruction.**

All: **Let them give thanks for God's steadfast love,
and let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,
and tell of God's deeds with songs of joy.**

***Hymn** MH #378 Amazing Grace verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6

Silent Prayer of Confession *reflecting on this passage:*

The people became impatient on the way and spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For we have no food or water and detest this miserable food." Then God sent poisonous serpents among them that bit the people, so many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against God and against you; pray to God to take away the serpents from us." *Numbers 21:4-7a*

Assurance of Pardon and Grace *reflecting on this passage:*

So Moses prayed for the people. And God said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live. *Numbers 21:7a-9*

Anthem "Deep River" African-American Spiritual

Scripture John 3:14-17, 19-21

Sermon Thy Presence My Light

***Hymn** Be Thou My Vision, verses 1-3 & Gaelic *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Vermont has just had the warmest winter in history. The latest poll shows a Presidential candidate leading who believes climate change is a hoax and promises to promote the use of fossil fuels. It's Lent, a time to face our trials and fears and look for a path through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Would it help to talk about this?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** Search Me, O God *hymn folder*

***Benediction**

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

Postlude "Go Along My Children" Rolf Pechukas

**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

Children's Time for Easter Sunday First, we would like to inform you that Rachel Guaraldi is taking a break from Story Sundays for the time being. We heartily thank Rachel Guaraldi for all of the amazing and wonderful Story Sundays that she has provided over the past year plus! Currently, we are working on how to be able to continue to offer carefully chosen spiritual stories to children and young families. At this point, we are feeling our way on this! Hopefully, we will be able to continue offering wonderful stories for young families in some way through June. Please contact one of us if you have thoughts on how to continue and/or what your family would like to see happen. **On Easter Sunday during the Children's Time in the Easter service, we will read aloud a story to the children.** Then, we will go with the children to the Parish Hall and do some activities to extend the meaning of the story. We plan to plant some seeds and to make Easter/spring cards for neighbors who could use a boost, followed by a special snack and an egg hunt. We warmly invite all children to join us! With love, Joey Hawkins and Danette Harris

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.

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.

Fulfilling Our Vision Committee Meeting You can find the Future Directions Vision and the Open and Affirming Covenant we are working to fulfill on our website. Our Native American Reparations Fund has been established, with a generous start-up donation from a member of our congregation. FOV usually meets the first Tuesday evening of every month. Please contact Kate Reimanis with any questions or ideas.

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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.

Mission Committee Update: Supporting Outright Vermont and Hearts You Hold We have a mission to fulfill our Open and Affirming Congregation. To help act on this, the Mission Committee has made a donation on behalf of the church to Outright Vermont in Burlington, VT. Outright Vermont (ORVT) builds safe, healthy, and supportive environments for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth. ORVT is one of the longest standing queer organizations in Vermont and the only one that works specifically with young people. We also donated to Hearts You Hold, a locally based organization founded by Eloise Ginty, a former Newton School teacher, who has spoken in worship about it. The organization supports “migrants, immigrants, asylees and refugees by taking the time to ask them what they need or want. Our process connects & supports individuals with generous people who provide assistance by funding requests.” We are honored to support these two hard-working and loving organizations! Please let us know if you have other ideas for mission work. With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

Church Calendar:

Thurs. March 14	Heartfulness Circle Zoom 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*

Haiku by Mel Goertz:
Peace and Reconciliation
Picasso's
Dove on an Olive Branch

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