



March 17, 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

March 17, 2024

Fifth Sunday in Lent

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

Revelation 21:4-5 King James Version

Gathering Music

Rolf Pechukas

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude "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.

Introit "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" African-American Spiritual

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from Isaiah 43:18-21* Christina Robinson

Leader: Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.

People: **I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.**

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Leader: The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,

**People: The people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.**

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

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon *Barbara Sargent*

All: Almighty God,

Whose breath quickened us,

Whose tongue named us,

Whose language we are:

Grant us grace to be true words —

Not gentle when it is in anger that we live,

Not smooth when it is desperation that we know,

Not patient when time has narrowed down to now,

Not wise, not neat, not all our fences mended,

But words, broken yet honest words, and lost,

Stumbling their way toward silence.

(silent reflection)

Leader: Holy God, take us back. Recall us.

Then speak us once again.

Set us in order. Mend our shattered syntax.

Set all our commas straight.

Imbue in us a power that keeps company with pain,

Then march us across the pages of this beautiful, fragile,
tormented, and perishable earth to sing the songs of Zion.

In the name of the Word made flesh, made dead,

and made alive again, you are forgiven. Amen.

Anthem “Deep River” African-American Spiritual

Scripture Philippians 3:4b-9, 12-14; John 12:1-8

Sermon “I Am About To Do a New Thing:
Do You Not Perceive It?”

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

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

What is your vision of the new things that the Spirit of life wants to do right now, given what humanity has done and is doing? What new thing could excite you to help bring about in this church or community or world? What new thing do you feel calling to you, and what is it asking you to do or become in this new time?

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 As you may know, Rachel Guaraldi is taking a break from Story Sundays for the time being. We heartily thank Rachel for all of the amazing and wonderful Story Sundays that she has provided over the past year plus! Currently, Story Sunday is a work in progress - at this point, we plan to offer carefully chosen spiritual stories to children and young families for March, April, May, and June, with some wonderful folks who have stepped up to help. **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 of all ages to join us! With love, Danette Harris, Joey Hawkins, Christina Robinson, Beth Randall, and Kate Reimanis.

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:

Sun. March 17	Annemieke, “French Connections” 4:00 PM*
Thurs. March. 21	Heartfulness Circle Zoom 7:00 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:

Earth speaks to us.
Preserve woodlands, meadows,
wetlands for the nesting birds.

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