



March 31, 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 31, 2024

Easter

*MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal*

“Something has happened on the first day of the week, powerful enough to heal every wound, to recover every waste, to break down every barrier, to unlock every prison, to forgive every transgression, to unite everything at odds. There is love enough to flood every heart, to raise everyone dead and lost.” *Martin Smith*

**Gathering Music**

Cantornote Church Musicians

*Elizabethan music to celebrate spring*

**Blessing and Lighting the Peace Candle**

Pastor Tom Kinder

Leader: He is risen!

**People: He is risen indeed!**

Leader: In him 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: Hallelujah!

**People: Hallelujah!**

Leader: Let us pray for peace and the things that make for peace  
as we light the peace candle.

**Prelude** “Seele deine Spezereien” *Easter Oratorio* J.S. Bach  
(1685-1750)

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Call to Worship** *adapted from Psalm 118* Amber Wylie, Reader

Leader: We give thanks to you, O God, for you are good;  
Your steadfast love endures forever. Let Israel say,

**People: “God’s steadfast love endures forever!”  
You are our strength and our salvation.**

Leader: There are glad songs of victory  
in the tents of mercy and love:

**People:** “The right hand of God does valiantly.”  
**We shall not die, but we shall live,  
and recount your deeds, O God.**

**Leader:** Your way leads through suffering,  
but you do not give us over forever to death.

**People:** **You open to us the gates of your realm  
and its ways of mercy and love  
that we may enter and give thanks!**

**Leader:** We thank you that you have answered us  
and become our salvation.

**People:** **The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.  
This is your doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.**

**All:** **This is the day that our God has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

**\*Hymn** PH #185 Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain

**Children’s Time** *Petook: An Easter Story* by Caryll Houselander

**Anthem** “Allein Gott” *Cantata 104* J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

**Scripture** John 20:1-18

**Sermon** Holding On and Letting Go, Part II

**\*Hymn** MH #311 Now the Green Blade Riseth

**Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections**  
*Reflection Questions:* What hope does Easter inspire you to have  
this year? Where do you see signs of resurrection and new life  
happening now?

**Time of Prayer**

**Call to Offering**

**\*Benediction**

**\*Hymn** MH #302 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today vv. 1-5 only

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

**Postlude** “Mein Hertz ist Bereit” Nicholas Bruhns (1665-1697)

*\*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](http://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](mailto:unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com)

**New Children’s Story Program Starting Easter Sunday** During  
the Children's Time in this 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. **For  
the months of April, May and June**, we are planning to read aloud  
a carefully chosen story during the Children's Time in the service,  
one Sunday a month. Then, the children will go back to the Parish  
Hall with at least two of us to further explore the story, and for  
activities and a snack. **We warmly invite ALL children of all ages**  
to join us on Easter and during the new story Sundays  
this spring! **The next will be April 14<sup>th</sup>.** With love, Danette Harris,  
Joey Hawkins, Beth Randall and Christina Robinson

## **Welcome and Thank You, Cantornote Church Musicians!**

*Sarah Cantor, Susan Hodges, Rachel Kurland and Amber Wylie, Recorders; Lilian Broderick, Soprano; Jacob Cooper, Bass; Lisa Willems, Organist.*

**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.

**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 “Peace Action” and “Standing Together”** It is hard not to feel overwhelmed by all that is happening in the world right now. One thing that we, as a church, can do is to support organizations that are working hard to promote peace and love for our neighbors. We have recently supported two such organizations: **Peace Action** “is the nation’s largest grassroots peace network with chapters and affiliates in states across the country.” **Standing Together** “is a grassroots movement mobilizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel.... The future that we want — peace and independence for Israelis and Palestinians, full equality for all citizens, and true social, economic, and environmental justice — is possible.” Please let us know if you have any suggestions for mission work. Thank you. With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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## ***Translations and Notes***

**Prelude** “Seele deine Spezereien” *Easter Oratorio*  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

*Today is Bach’s 339<sup>th</sup> birthday, so it is fitting that we have two of his works in our service, plus a Postlude that is the composition of someone twenty years his senior whose work inspired Bach. Bach was a musician in both secular and sacred settings, but he inscribed all his work, “Soli deo gloria,” for the glory of God alone. The final years of his career were as a church musician, and the services would include entire cantatas which conveyed much of the message and spirit of that Sunday in the church year. The Easter Oratorio was first composed as the cantata for the service on April 1, 1725, 299 years ago tomorrow. “Seele deine Spezereien” is an aria from it.*

My soul, your spices  
Should no more be myrrh  
For only with the splendor of the laurel wreath  
Will your anxious longing be satisfied.

**Postlude** “Mein Hertz ist Bereit” (“My Heart Is Ready, God”)  
Nicholas Bruhns (1665-1697)

*Bruhns lived to be only 31, but he was already a major composer and organist whose work was reportedly greatly admired and studied by Johann Sebastian Bach. Both Bruhns and Bach studied with Dieterich Buxtehude, who considered Bruhns one of his best students. Not many of Bruhns’ compositions have survived.*

My heart, O God, is steadfast,  
My heart is steadfast;  
I will sing and make music.  
Awake, my soul!  
Awake, harp and lyre!  
I will awaken the dawn.

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## ***Translations and Notes continued***

**Anthem** “Allein Gott” *Cantata 104* J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

*This chorale was the final piece in Bach’s cantata Du Hirte Israel, höre (You Shepherd of Israel, Hear). The chorale was taken from a hymn composed by Cornelius Becker based on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Bach composed the cantata for the second Sunday after Easter. It was first performed on April 23, 1724, three hundred years ago next month. We wrote a new translation for this service that has in mind both Easter and the context facing the shepherd and sheep of earth today.*

O faithful shepherd of all earth,  
Great Spirit of Creation,  
You seek to guide us all from birth,  
All creatures, every nation:  
Green pastures, all good, your intent  
Through loving shepherds you have sent.  
You call and wise sheep listen.

You lead to waters calm and clean,  
All souls and earth renewing.  
We choose the right path we have seen  
And know it as your doing.  
We love and serve earth for your sake,  
For you flow through all life you make,  
A light that shines in darkness.

Beyond all dying rises light,  
So we walk past all fearing.  
When grievous shadows fill our sight,  
We know dawn’s joy is nearing.  
You are the shepherd in our heart.  
No evil force can ever part  
Love bound with you in oneness.

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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 Herbert A. Goertz**

Gliding off their tree  
Seven turkeys in a row  
Landing in deep snow

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