



December 18, 2022

*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***

December 18, 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Mary Sunday, Sunday of Love

*MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal*

“We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of Man is begotten in us.” *Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)*

**Gathering Music**

Becky Bailey

**Silent Prayer of Invocation**

Pastor Tom Kinder

**Prelude**

**Introit** “Mary Had a Baby” Spiritual

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

**Responsive Reading** *adapted from Luke 1:46-55,  
the Magnificat of Mary*

John Echeverria

Leader: “My soul magnifies you,  
and my spirit rejoices in you,  
the creator, redeemer and sustainer of the universe,

**People: for you have looked with favor  
on the lowly state of one who serves you.**

Leader: Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for you, O force of love and life and light,  
have done great things in me and through me,  
and holy is your name.

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**People:** All shall know that your mercy extends to the meek  
who stand in humble awe before you  
from generation to generation.

**Leader:** You have shown strength with your Spirit's arm;  
you have scattered the proud  
in the imagination of their hearts.

**People:** You have brought down the powerful from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly;

**Leader:** you have filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.

**People:** You have come to the aid of your child Israel  
and all the hurting children of the earth,  
in remembrance of your promise of mercy,  
understood by the prophets of old,  
for your children now and forever more."

**\*Hymn** PH #131 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

#### **Prayer of Confession (in unison)**

Holy God, we confess that when your angel comes  
Announcing we are pregnant with God's gifts,  
Telling us that we have Christ within us,  
Blessing us with goodness and light  
To deliver to the world, so often  
We do not respond as Mary did.  
We disbelieve or hide in fear or make excuses.  
We let our busyness or plans distract us.  
Please forgive us, O God.  
Help us to begin anew now.  
Help us to say as Mary did,  
"Here am I, the servant of the Lord;  
Let it be with me according to your word."  
Help us have the courage, faith and humble love  
To bring forth the gifts  
You have given us to share.

#### **Silent Prayer**

#### **Assurance of Pardon and Grace**

**Sung Response** PH #110 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel *verse 1 only*

#### **Lighting of the Fourth Advent Candle**

Members of the Lord's Acre Committee

*Please see your pew card for the Lord's Prayer. We will read the  
Traditional Version at the end.*

**Anthem** "Born in the Night, Mary's Child" Geoffrey Ainger

**Scripture** Luke 1:26-45

**Sermon** Bearer of Light

**\*Hymn** Mary Magnified God's Being *hymn folder*

#### **Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections**

"When a change wants to happen, it looks for people to act through.  
How do we know when a change wants to happen? We feel the want  
inside us. There is a desire, a tugging at us to be involved. But that  
doesn't make the change inevitable.... For the change to happen  
through us, we need to ...break through a resistance that has been  
holding us back." *Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone from Active  
Hope* What change do you feel wants to happen now, what light  
does the Spirit want you or us to bear, and what resistance do we  
need to overcome?

#### **Time of Prayer**

#### **Call to Offering**

#### **\*Congregational Sung Benediction**

May Clouds Part, Showing Stars Above *see page four*

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

## Postlude

*\* Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

***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)

ADVENT

## May Clouds Part, Showing Stars Above

*Thomas Cary Kinder, 2008, 2015*



May clouds part, show - ing stars a - bove. The stars of hope, peace,  
Go now and pass love's bless - ing on; Go forth and shine like



joy and love. May those in dark - ness see their light  
Christ - mas dawn. Christ gives you light to bring to birth:



To help them through the long - est night.  
Good will toward all and peace on earth.

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**New: Story Sundays!** Question: who doesn't love a good story?  
Answer: We ALL love good stories!

From the time we are tiny and through all the rest of our lives, stories keep us going. A good story can make us laugh, it can make us cry, it can make us think, and it can connect us with our fellow human beings.

**In this spirit, the United Church of Strafford is excited to offer monthly Story Sundays!** Using stories, song, and poetry (and maybe cookies!) we will spend the second Sunday morning service of each month exploring some of the great questions that our fellow humanfolk have wondered about through the ages - and still wonder about.

Story Sundays are for everyone. The children will be invited to remain in the sanctuary for the entire service, and it will be structured to work for them as well as the adults. We had a preview of what these services will be like with Pageant Sunday this year.

Themes of upcoming Story Sundays could include questions like, Who is God? How do we find God? How do we pray?

**The next Story Sundays will be January 8, February 12 and March 12, 2023.**

**Heartfulness Contemplative Training Circle** gathers on Thursday evenings at 7:00 PM in person and by Zoom and offers an informal meditation all other evenings at 7:30 PM. You are invited to be part of the circle anytime. See our website Welcome page for details.

***Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here!***

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**Mission Committee Update: Honoring Kate Reimanis' Mother, Nancy Lewis, with Food for Ukraine**

Kate and her brother, George, recently gave a kind donation to the Mission Committee in honor of their late mother, Nancy Lewis. We thank them and we were proud to make a contribution on behalf of the church to World Central Kitchen in Nancy's memory to help feed the people of Ukraine.

**Also, a big thank you to everyone who brought food for Pageant Sunday** last week and who has placed food in the basket recently. The Mission Committee was happy to add two cases of soup to what was donated and deliver all of the food to the Sharon Food Shelf this week. The food was accepted with gratitude! With love, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

**Covid Precautions at Church** We continue to require masks while in the church building. Thank you for helping the church be a safe and healthy place for all! *from The Steering Committee*

**Pastoral Care:** Pastor Tom Kinder serves only one-third time, and weddings, funerals and pastoral counseling for individual and couples are no longer part of what he does. The church council is looking for someone qualified to fill the important position of our congregation's Pastoral Care Provider after the retirement of the Rev. Deadra Ashton. For more information, please see the front of the bulletin for ways to contact us.

**Fulfilling Our Vision** The Fulfilling Our Vision committee is continuing our focus on anti-racism and becoming officially Open to and Affirming of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We also voted at Annual Meeting to create a Reparations Fund for Native Americans, and we will be exploring how that can be most beneficial. The vision we are fulfilling is our Future Directions Statement that you can find on the pew card or on the Welcome page of our website. For more information please speak with Kate Reimanis or email her at kreimanis@gmail.com.

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**Advent, Christmas & Epiphany Services & Events Calendar**

**Sun. Dec. 18 Fourth Sunday of Advent, Mary Sunday**

Lighting the candle of Love and celebrating Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the model she serves for our spiritual lives.

**Tues. Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service 5:30 PM**

Picture excited and awe-filled children, a sanctuary lit entirely by candles, beloved lessons and carols and gorgeous instrumental music provided by The Cantornote Church Musicians, in a service timed to allow you to have all your other Christmas Eve traditions as well.

**Sun. Dec. 25 Christmas Day, 10:00 AM Zoom-only gathering**

On Christmas morning we will gather by Zoom to read aloud a beloved Christmas story for all ages and to say Merry Christmas to one another.

**Sun. Jan. 1 Epiphany Sunday Zoom-only Worship Service** The Magi follow the star...

**Sun. Jan. 8 Second Sunday Story Sunday** (see page seven)

**Sun. Jan. 15 Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday** Vermont UCC Open & Affirming consultant Jeffrey Tuper-Giles leads worship

**Next Concerts** Held on Fridays (except where noted), 7:00-8:15 PM. Admission by donation, 20% goes to the church's Manheim Fund for the Arts. Featuring pianist Annemieke McLane:

**Sunday January 22<sup>nd</sup> 4:00 PM** "New Hopes"

**Sunday February 12<sup>th</sup> 4:00 PM** "With Love"

**Sunday March 5<sup>th</sup> 4:00 PM** "Masterworks"

**Childcare** We welcome children of all ages to the United Church of Strafford! Childcare is available during the church service, provided by teens and adults for children second grade and younger.

**Haiku by Mel Goertz:**

Step by step we walk the path  
light here and there  
until the Sun comes up.

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