



January 8, 2023
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

January 8, 2022

First Sunday after Epiphany, Story Sunday
MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being”

Birds afloat in air’s current,
sacred breath? No, not breath of God,
it seems, but God
the air enveloping the whole
globe of being.
It’s we who breathe, in, out, in, the sacred,
leaves astir, our wings
rising, ruffled—but only saints
take flight. We cower
in cliff-crevice or edge out gingerly
on branches close to the nest. The wind
marks the passage of holy ones riding
that ocean of air. Slowly their wake
reaches us, rocks us.
But storm or still,
numb or poised in attention,
we inhale, exhale, inhale,
encompassed, encompassed.

Denise Levertov

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

Welcome and Announcements

Pastor Tom Kinder

Greeting and Call to Worship

Rachel Guaraldi

Opening Song “Gathering of Spirits” Carrie Newcomer

Reflection on the Peace Candle

page one

Blessing and Lighting the Peace Candle

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

***Peace Song** “I’ve Got Peace Like a River”

Reflection on the Stories’ Theme

Puppet Story *Faith and Play: Images of God*

Wondering Questions

***Active Body Prayer** “God before me...”

First Book Story *What is God Like?* Read by Danette Harris by Rachel Held Evans and Matthew Paul Turner

Second Book Story *In God’s Name* Read by Joey Hawkins by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Wondering Questions Think/Pair/Share

***Song** “This Little Light of Mine”

Reflection on Prayer

Sharing of Joys, Concerns and Prayer Requests

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

Benediction

page two

Closing Song “Gathering of Spirits” Carrie Newcomer

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

Postlude

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

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

Thank you to Rachel Guaraldi who along with Danette Harris, Joey Hawkins and Tom Kinder developed the Story Sunday program! (See page five for a description.)

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.

Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday, January 15th The Fulfilling Our Vision Committee has invited the Open & Affirming consultant Jeffrey Tuper-Giles of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ to lead worship on January 15th, Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday, the third anniversary of the day we held a congregational conversation and reached consensus to explore becoming officially Open to and Affirming of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

page three

Fulfilling Our Vision Survey Please fill out and return the survey from the Fulfilling Our Vision Committee to help guide our education and discussion series about differences in sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and how the church and society respond to them. If you are not on the church's mail or email list, you can find a copy of the survey on the table at the back of the sanctuary or on our church website. Thank you!

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.

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.

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 continues to look for ways to provide a full range of pastoral care. Those in need can reach out to Deacons through Becky Bailey (rbailey@sover.net), Debby Richie (dc.richie@hotmail.com, and Cameron Speth (cece@speth.com) or call the church number printed on the cover of this bulletin.

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 22nd 4:00 PM "New Hopes"

Sunday February 12th 4:00 PM "With Love"

Sunday March 5th 4:00 PM "Masterworks"

page four

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.

Haiku by Mel Goertz:

My world was a window.
First day out on the porch,
fresh air and blue sky.

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

page five