



June 23, 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

June 23, 2024

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“Let’s admit it. We’re on our own. What government on the planet right now even in the best-case scenario is coming anywhere close to reacting to this [crisis] the way it should be? No one’s even starting to come close. So we’re on our own, it’s up to us, but we’re still here. And so are we going to *listen*, and behave appropriately now? Because if not now, when? Because we have a chance right now to go out and listen, and then I truly believe each one of us will get our marching orders, if you will, from the earth.” *Dahr Jamail, author of The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption, from the film Living in the Time of Dying*

Gathering Music

Erik Reimanis

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude “Nobody’s Home” Kerry Livgren

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 “The Sound of Silence” Paul Simon

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from various scriptures* Joey Hawkins

Leader: Be still, and know that I am God.

People: **In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and trust shall be your strength.**

Leader: Whenever you pray, go into your inner room
and shut the door and pray to the one
who is hidden in that stillness
and listen—
listen for the still, small voice,
listen for the silence.

People: **I wait for you, O Spirit, my soul waits,
and in your word I hope;
My soul waits for the Spirit more than those
who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.**

Leader: My heart is lowly, it is not lifted up,
and my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with self-exaltation,
with grandiose or pretentious ambitions,
but I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother.
My soul is content within me.

People: **Come, behold the works
of the Spirit of the universe,
the God who is love.
who makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
who shatters the spear, and breaks the bow;
who burns the shields with fire.**

All: **Be still...
and know that I am God.**

***Hymn** MH #393 Spirit of the Living God

Silent Confession, Assurance of Pardon and Lord's Prayer

Anthem "Blowin' in the Wind" Bob Dylan

Readings from Gary Lawless, Mary Oliver and Mark 4:35-41

Sermon Listening Through the Storm

***Hymn** Come By Here, My God *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: Have you ever listened deeply to a person, or situation, or nature, or to the voice of the Spirit within you, and been changed by what you heard? Can you think of a time in history when a community or nation listened and then changed its course?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** Listen Well, Before You Talk *hymn folder*

***Benediction**

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

Postlude "Angel" Sarah McLachlan

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

Please stay for refreshments and neighborliness in the Parish Hall.

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

Open and Affirming Celebration and Seeking Spirit Sunday July 14th We will have three big events on Sunday, July 14th. **First, we will celebrate our standing** in the national church as a certified Open and Affirming Congregation during the service and refreshments (a Susan Hodges rainbow cake!). **Second, the 14th is our next Seeking Spirit Sunday.** It will feature guest speaker Wendy Teller-Elsberg on, “The Need to Be Known as Ourselves: How parenting a non-binary child taught me we all have a gender identity.” Wendy will help us reflect on gender and misgendering. Then after celebratory refreshments we will have the third event of the 14th: **an important circle conversation** for the whole congregation about the future world we foresee and the role of the church within it. See the next announcement for more details.

Important Conversation on July 14th after Refreshments The Church Council invites you to a conversation on July 14th about the world we foresee 25 years from now and the role of the church within it. The Council has been discussing launching a planning process, and this conversation will allow the congregation to participate in the **pre-planning** discussion. Our goals are to get a sense of the importance of planning at this time, and the scope of planning we may need. We will ask four questions: 1. Given the way things are going today, what do you think our society and world will look like in 25 years socially, environmentally, economically, culturally, politically or any other way? 2. What kind of support will the people of that time need, either of a kind that a church traditionally has offered or support that goes beyond past practices? 3. If there is a spiritual community in Strafford serving the people of that time, what would that spiritual community ideally be and do? 4. Churches, like most institutions, go through life cycles of rising anew, reaching a plateau and then descending. Different kinds of planning are appropriate at each stage. Where would you say we are in our lifecycle now? The meeting will end at or before 1:30 PM. Please speak with Tom if you have questions.

page four

Election 2024: What Is at Stake? A Talk on Constitutional Democracy and the Rule of Law Here on Monday, June 24th at 7:00 PM The policy positions of the two principal presidential candidates, and more broadly, the two principal political parties, span a wide variety of issues, foreign and domestic.

As the November election approaches, we will hear competing positions on a variety of issues. Cutting across all these specific topics, however, are larger themes conjuring two different visions of what it means to live in a “constitutional democracy” respecting the “rule of law.”

Presidents wield great power and influence, to be sure. Yet that power and influence is divided and checked at the federal level by the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the Supreme Court. It is also shared in our federal system with the powers allocated to state and local governments, and to lower state and federal courts.

The two presidential candidates, and their respective parties, are animated by quite different notions concerning the proper distribution of powers among the various institutions that comprise our constitutional democracy. They also embrace differing views of what it means to live in a society that respects the rule of law. It is no exaggeration to characterize the contrasts as embracing starkly different visions of the fundamental character of the nation.

Rod Smolla, President of the Vermont Law and Graduate School and a lifelong constitutional law scholar, teacher, and litigator, will seek to articulate, objectively and fairly, these contrasting visions, and then lead an open discussion with attendees on the issues posed.

The talk will be available to livestream on Zoom and we hope to post a recording afterward. See the Welcome Page of our website for more about this.

Fulfilling Our Vision Committee You can find the Future Directions Vision and the Open and Affirming Covenant we are working to fulfill on our website and pew cards. FOV usually meets the first Tuesday of every month. Contact: Kate Reimanis.

page five

Why Have an Election Speaker Series in Our Church? Our Fulfilling Our Vision committee looks for ways to fulfill our Future Directions Vision which says in part: “We want to be **a center for questioning and discussing....** We hope to **consider seemingly insurmountable world problems** [and find a path to action].... We want to **create a safe forum** where we can consider big questions and controversial issues..., where we can disagree and still get along.” We feel the choices we make in this election will shape our future and are extremely important to discuss. By IRS rules, a church cannot endorse or oppose any candidate, directly or indirectly, but it can offer education on issues that will be affected by an election. Our speaker series is designed to do that, entitled “Election 2024: What Is at Stake?” Our two goals are: 1) to educate people about what is at stake in the election in a variety of issue areas; and, 2) to inspire people to become active and devote time and resources to help elect candidates who are more aligned with the nation and world they want to create, whoever those candidates may be. We will ask each speaker to make clear the difference between the two major parties and their candidates on one particular issue or set of issues. We hope people will come away with a good overview and specific examples of the starkly contrasting worlds the two different approaches to the issue would create.

Upcoming Speakers on “Election 2024: What Is at Stake?”

The speaker series that begins on **Monday, June 24th** with Rod Smolla’s presentation on “Democracy and the Rule of Law” will continue with at least three other presentations:

Wed. July 24 Jim Antal, Climate and Environment 7:00 PM

Wed. August 7 Jim Wilson, Economic Issues 7:00 PM

Sun. August 25 Jameson Davis, Individual Rights 2:00 PM

We will announce more details about each talk as it approaches. Please spread the word about these events!

Pastoral Care: Pastor Tom Kinder is available and eager to talk with you. Please speak with him after worship to set up a time, or email rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com or call him at 333-9967.

page six

Mission Committee Update: Honoring Pride Month and Helping the Unhoused To honor and celebrate Pride Month, we made a donation to **Outright Vermont** on behalf of the church. Outright Vermont is Vermont’s only queer youth service organization. Also, we donated to **Good Samaritan Haven** which is a Vermont nonprofit that provides emergency assistance to people experiencing homelessness. Please let us know if you have ideas for mission work. Thank you! With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

Independence Day Sunday 10:00 AM Service July 7th we will celebrate the incorrigible optimism that, both in our spiritual lives and in our civic political lives, truth and justice will prevail over the long haul in our nation. Rod Smolla will preach on “The Grapes of Wrath Meets This Land is My Land.” We will have three outstanding guest musicians leading us in songs of protest, justice and, in the end, optimism, that have been important in American culture: Dylan Smolla with Jordan Smith and Genevieve Wiklacz.

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.

Church Calendar:

Mon. June 24 Election 2024 Rod Smolla Talk 7:00 PM*

Sun. June 30 New Members Group after refreshments

Sun. July 7 Independence Day Sunday Service*

Sun. July 14 Open and Affirming Celebration 10:00 AM*

Future Vision Conversation 11:45 AM-1:15 PM*

Wed. July 24 Election 2024 Jim Antal Talk 7:00 PM*

**see the announcement about this*

Haiku by Herbert A. Goertz

Fireflies at night

Dancing galaxies of light

The joy of being.

page seven