



July 14, 2024
Morning Worship and Children's Programs at 10:00

United Church of Strafford

230 Justin Morrill Highway
PO Box 124, Strafford, Vermont 05072
802-765-4585

Email: unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com
rev.thomas.cary.kinder@gmail.com
Website: unitedchurchofstrafford.com

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

July 14, 2024
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost,
Open and Affirming Celebration and Seeking Spirit Sunday
MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

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. *Our Open and Affirming Covenant*

As an Open & Affirming church, we commit to seek ways to incorporate the spirit of our Open and Affirming covenant in our church life, including worship, mission, outreach, advocacy, individual and collective education and reflection, and mindfully crafting our interior and exterior spaces to reflect the covenant.

Our Open and Affirming Implementation Plan

Gathering Music

Becky Bailey

Welcome and Announcements

Joey Hawkins

Prelude

Blessing and Lighting the Candles

Danette Harris

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.

Scripture Reading Mark 10:13-16

***Hymn** O for a World *hymn folder*

Unison Reading of Our Open and Affirming Covenant

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Celebration of Becoming Open & Affirming Pastor Tom Kinder

Anthem “True Colors” Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly

Introduction of Our Seeking Spirit Speaker

Reflection

Wendy Teller-Elsberg

“The Need to Be Known as Ourselves: How Parenting a Non-Binary Child Taught Me We All Have a Gender Identity”

Guided Activity on Gender and Misgendering

Thinking Together Gender Identity: Questions and Answers, Reflections and Conversation

Sharing Joys, Concerns and Prayer Requests

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** PH #425 Men, Whose boast It Is

***Unison Benediction**

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is honorable, if there is any virtue and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Practice what you have learned and received and heard from the saints, and seen them do, and be blessed this day and all days by the presence of the God of peace. Amen.

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

Postlude

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

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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

Thank you, Wendy Teller-Elsberg! Wendy lives in Norwich and is a mom of four, a school speech-language therapist of 20 years, the wife of a legal aid lawyer, and a self-described “cisgender, straight, white woman who is socially marginalized in very few ways.” Her life experience as the parent of an agender -- that is genderless -- child, has led her to think, feel, and speak deeply about gender identity. We are so grateful that she is willing to share what she has learned with us today!

July 28th We Worship at the UU Church in South Strafford

Pastor Tom Kinder will lead a joint service of our congregation with the Unitarian-Universalist congregation in their sanctuary across from Barrett Hall at 10:00 AM on Sunday, July 28th. The Cantornote Church Musicians will provide the music as well as the churches’ combined choirs. Please be sure to let people know of this change of location and this opportunity to worship in another wonderful space with another wonderful group of people!

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.

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Please remember to support the Food Shelf! The white basket in the back of the sanctuary is for donations of non-perishable items to the Sharon Food Shelf, which is open to Strafford residents. Hygiene products, diapers, coffee, soups, laundry detergent and snacks are some examples of needed items. Thank you, in advance, for your donations.

Mission Committee Update #1: Honoring Vicki Eastman With a Donation to the Strafford Senior Lunch Program

On behalf of our church, we recently made a donation to the Strafford Senior Citizens in honor of our kind friend and neighbor, Vicki Eastman, who recently passed away. Vicki and her husband, Ed, have worked tirelessly for years to support the senior lunch program. We miss you, we honor you and we thank you, dear Vicki and we are holding Ed and the family in our hearts.

Mission Committee Update #2: Feeding Our Brothers and Sisters in War Torn Areas Recently on behalf of our church we sent a donation to World Central Kitchen, asking for our contribution to be used to feed people in war torn countries, particularly in Gaza and in Ukraine. We sent our donation along with love and prayers for peace in all places where there is conflict and violence. Please let one of us know if you have an idea for mission work. Thank you. With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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.

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.

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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 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.

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Video Recording of Rod Smolla's Election Presentation You can watch a video recording of the first event in our Election 2024: What Is at Stake? series by going to the Welcome Page of our website.

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 will continue:

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. **The talks 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. Please spread the word about these events!

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July 24, 7:00 PM Election Speaker Jim Antal on “Determining our Climate Future” Our next speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Jim Antal. Why do the impacts on climate and environment deserve our attention? What are the records on climate and environment of former President Trump and President Biden? What are the climate and environment plans, policies, promises and pledges offered by former President Trump and President Biden? The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, author of *Climate Church, Climate World*, serves as Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the head of the United Church of Christ. While leading the 350 UCC churches in Massachusetts, he preached on the climate crisis in over 400 settings.

August 7, 7:00 PM Election Speaker Jim Wilson on “Economic Issues within an Election Circus” In addition to providing context for the 2024 election, this talk will clarify where each of the candidates stands on critical economic issues. Please come with questions and substantive comments! Jim Wilson is a retired secondary school teacher of history and economics. For the past decade he has taught Osher courses on political economy, most recently one entitled “Democracy, like Humpty Dumpty, is Teetering.” He lives in Strafford, loves most outdoor activities including gardening, hiking, golf, and snowshoeing, is an avid photographer, a “news junkie,” and loves to travel.

Church Calendar:

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*
Sun. July 28	We worship in the UU Sanctuary, 10:00 AM*
Wed. Aug. 7	Jim Wilson, Economic Issues 7:00 PM

**see the announcement about this*

Haiku by Mel. Goertz

Love created the first cell.

Then love joined
two of the cells together.

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