



July 21, 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

July 21, 2024

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

Our current situation is a petri dish for fear and mean-spiritedness.... If we don't want to join that race to the bottom, we will have to pursue strength of character.... When others stoke fear and resentment, we radiate courage and grace.... Sarah Kendzior is an anthropologist who studies authoritarianism. She knows that in turbulent times, people grow afraid, and their fear is a kind of psychological energy.... Authoritarians are masters at manipulating the energy of fear and resentment. During collapse, as fear and resentment intensify, we should expect authoritarians to line up and become more and more popular and powerful, feeding on our fear and being fueled by our resentment.... Authoritarianism...eats away at who you are. It makes you afraid, and fear can make you cruel.... In that context, she wrote, "You need to be your own light."

McLaren quotes a friend saying: "I used to think that hope was the confidence that what I fear won't happen. Now I think that hope is the confidence that what I fear will happen, but that I don't have to be afraid." *Brian McLaren, Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*

Gathering Music "China Doll" Hunter/Garcia Erik Reimanis

Silent Prayer of Invocation Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude "Star of Bethlehem" Neil Young

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. *page one*

Introit “Days Like This” Van Morrison

Welcome and Announcements and Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *adapted from Psalm 37* Danette Harris

Leader: Do not fret because of the corrupt
whose greed oppresses the poor
and destroys the earth;
do not be afraid of wrongdoers
who fear what they do not understand
and attack what they fear,

People: **For they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.**

Leader: Trust in the Spirit and do good

People: **And you will live on the earth sustainably.**

Leader: Take delight in the Spirit, love the sacred way,

People: **And the way will lead you to ever greater love.**

Leader: Commit your way to the Spirit,
trust in the Spirit, and the Spirit will act,

People: **And will make all you do shine like the light,
and the rightness of your cause like the noonday.**

Leader: Be still before the Spirit, and wait patiently;

People: **Do not fret over those
who do not follow the sacred way,
who prosper as they do harmful things.
Refrain from resentment, and forsake anger.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.**

Leader: Oppressors plot against those who walk
in the paths of rightness,
and gnash their teeth at them,

People: **But our steps are made firm by the Spirit
when we walk the way of love;
though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong,
for a higher power holds us by the hand.**

***Hymn** When Peace Like a River *hymn folder*

Silent Confession and Assurance of Pardon

Unison Reading *The 23rd Psalm, King James Version*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his names sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Anthem “Ripple” Hunter/Garcia

Scripture Readings Matthew 5:1-12, 6:25-27, 31a, 33-34

Sermon Do Not Fret

***Hymn** The Only Thing to Fear Is Fear *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Reflection Questions: What makes you worried or afraid these days? What calms your fears and gives you courage?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** MH #474 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

***Benediction** *from Philippians 4*

page three

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

Postlude “I Won’t Back Down” Tom Petty

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

Please stay for refreshments and neighborliness in the Parish Hall.

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

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!

Church Calendar:

Wed. July 24	Election 2024 Jim Antal Talk 7:00 PM*
Sun. July 28	We worship in the UU Sanctuary, 10:00 AM*
Sun. Aug. 4	Suzanne Lupien & Mel Goertz lead worship on “Meeting Teilhard de Chardin”*
Wed. Aug. 7	Jim Wilson, Economic Issues 7:00 PM*
Sun. Aug. 11	Herbert Goertz leads worship*
Sun. Aug. 18	Rachel Guaraldi leads worship*
Sun. Aug. 25	Jameson Davis, Individual Rights 2:00 PM*

**see the announcement about this*

August Seeking Spirit Services Pastor Tom Kinder will be away during August. We will have four wonderful Seeking Spirit services. See the calendar on page four for the schedule of the first three.

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.

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.

Mission Committee Update: 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

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.

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.

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!

page six

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.

Sunday August 25, 2:00 PM Election Speaker Jameson Davis on Individual Rights We will have more on this event in the bulletin next Sunday.

*We are an Open and Affirming Congregation.
Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here!*

Haiku by Mel. Goertz
Old age requires effort,
but the song sparrow
still sings in the tree.

page seven