

*Readings for July 28, 2024*

*United Service of The Universalist Society of Strafford, Vermont  
and the United Church of Strafford, Vermont*

**Responsive Reading** *adapted from Proverbs 8* Gayle Giovanna

Leader: Does not wisdom call,  
and does not understanding raise her voice?

People: **On the heights, beside the way,  
at the crossroads she takes her stand;  
beside the gates in front of the town she cries out:**

Leader: "To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.  
Add thoughtfulness and care to simplicity;  
increase intelligence and intuition where they are lacking.

People: **"Take my instruction instead of silver,  
and knowledge rather than choice gold;  
for wisdom is better than jewels,  
and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.**

Leader: "I love those who love me,  
and those who seek me diligently find me.

People: **"I walk in the way of right mindfulness  
and right action,  
along the paths of justice,  
endowing all who love me with richness of life  
and the goodness of the earth.**

Leader: "And now, my children, listen to me:  
happy are those who keep my ways.  
Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.

People: **"Happy is the one who listens to me,  
watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.  
For whoever finds me finds life  
and obtains spiritual grace."**

*Readings by John Freitag:*

The principles that guide Unitarian Universalists are:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations  
and in society at large.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures which moves us to a renewal of the spirit.

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love.

Wisdom from the worlds religions which inspire our ethical and spiritual lives.

Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors.

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against the idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

From the Future Directions Vision, adopted unanimously in 2018:

The United Church of Strafford aspires to be a welcoming congregation of open doors, hearts and minds, accepting our imperfections, embracing our differences and other cultures and traditions, and maintaining freedom to choose beliefs as individuals while living up to the name United Church....

We want to be a congregation that has vital involvement in everyday life in the community and that reaches out to help those in need. We intend to be a force, not just a presence, responding to wrongs, threats and destructive forces in the world and effecting positive social change, connecting religion to issues of peace, justice and the care of God's creation.

We want...to be a sanctuary in the midst of a complex world where we come to be renewed to go out and serve again. We need it to be a place of inspiration and wisdom, with worship services that allow us to connect to our better selves and reflect on a deeper meaning in life, enriched by beautiful words and music, by traditional scriptures, rituals and church seasons, by other religious perspectives and by contemporary voices that help us find new ways of speaking about God and the spiritual realm. We want to offer training in contemplative practice and cultivate a way of seeing the world and our lives as sacred....

We want to create a safe forum where we can consider big questions and controversial issues, sharing with healthy communication, where we can disagree and still get along, listening humbly, openly and with fairness and compassion to others with differing views.