



July 7, 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 7, 2024

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Independence Day Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“And in the eyes of the people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage.” *John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath*

“We do not think that it will now be seriously contended that because a person is without employment and without funds he constitutes a ‘moral pestilence.’ Poverty and immorality are not synonymous.”
United States Supreme Court, Edwards v. California (1941)

“I remain hopeful that our society will come together to address the complexities of the homelessness challenge facing the most vulnerable among us. That responsibility is shared by those vulnerable populations, the States and cities in which they reside, and each and every one of us.” *Justice Sonja Sotomayor, dissenting in City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson (2024)*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. *Mathew 5:6*

Gathering Music

American Medley

Dylan Smolla, Emma Coe, Kat Gaukhman, Haana Juman, Evan

Ryser, Corey Malone-Smolla, Rod Smolla and Quinn Thomashow

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude *by the Instrumental Musicians, Choir and Congregation*
the words are in the hymn folder

“Down by the Riverside” Traditional

“Will the Circle Be Unbroken” Habershon/Gabriel/Carter

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.

***Song** We Shall Overcome *hymn folder*

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship Rod Smolla
The Grapes of Wrath Meets This Land is My Land

***Song** This Land Is My Land *hymn folder*

Responsive Reading *from Isaiah 2:3-5* Anja Smolla

Leader: And many people shall go and say, “Come ye,
and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,

People: **And He will teach us of His ways,
and we will walk in His paths.**

Leader: For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

People: **And He shall judge among the nations,
and shall rebuke many people;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.**

Meditation Rod Smolla
*The Grapes of Wrath Meets This Land is My Land:
When Negativity Won't Pull You Through*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

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Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Song** I'll Fly Away *hymn folder*

Invitation to Holy Communion

Words of Institution and Prayer of Consecration

Sharing of the Elements *remaining seated*

(All are welcome to this feast of love. We all eat the bread and drink the cup together. We serve gluten-free crackers as well as gluten bread, and we serve juice, not wine, so that all may partake.)

Prayer of Thanksgiving *unison*

We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Please strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and let us show forth your praise in our lives by following the way of Christ with joy. May it be no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us, our truest and best self. Amen

***Benediction**

Postlude American Gospel Medley

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

We are an Open and Affirming Congregation.

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

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.

Sign up for **weekly emails** about upcoming worship and other news
at unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com

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Thank you to Today's Musicians! Here are some of them, and more keep joining!

Dylan Smolla is a Brooklyn based multi-instrumentalist and mixed medium artist. Studying jazz through high school and college, he developed a passion for improvisational music and the oral practice of harmony and rhythm. Art is a spiritual practice for me that brings me closer to community!

Emma Coe is a 23-year-old from New Jersey who attended Florida State University and frequently participated in karaoke, where she constantly drew in crowds with her renditions of "Vienna" by Billy Joel.

Haana Juman is a 22-year-old classically trained flautist from Florida who loves to sing while tending to her plants. She enjoys singing "A Whole New World" from Aladdin at any karaoke bar by which she strolls.

Kat Gaukhan is a 23-year-old Floridian who has a passion for supporting her friends Emma and Haana in their karaoke endeavors. They are grateful for the opportunity to be welcomed into the community of Strafford for a beautiful celebration of this country.

Rod Smolla lives in Strafford with his spouse Anja and is a student of American law and culture.

Independence Day Sunday 10:00 AM Service July 7th we will celebrate the incorrigible optimism that truth and justice will prevail in our nation. Rod Smolla will preach on "The Grapes of Wrath Meets This Land is My Land." We will have outstanding guest musicians leading us in songs of protest, justice and, in the end, optimism, that have been important in American culture.

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.

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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 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. **(If we decide to move forward with planning it will cover only the next 5 years, not 25.)** 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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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!

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.

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Mission Committee Update: 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.

Please remember the basket in the back for the Food Shelf! Please let one of us know if you have ideas for mission work. We fund vetted organizations, not individuals. Thank you. With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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.

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:

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*

Sun. July 28 We worship in the UU Sanctuary, 10:00 AM

**see the announcement about this*

Haiku by Mel Goertz

Love transformed the caterpillar.

Love gave him wings
to fly in the sky.

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