

Readings for September 1, 2024
United Church of Strafford In Person and Zoom Service

Responsive Reading *adapted from Psalm 15*

Leader: O God, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

People: **Those who return faithfully to your sacred way,
who try again and again to do what is right,
who speak the truth from their heart.**

Leader: They will not slander with their tongue,
or do evil to their friends,
or reproach their neighbors.

People: **They will see evil-doers for what they are,
and recognize and honor those who follow your way.
They will stay true to their word even to their hurt.**

Leader: They will not lend money at interest,
or seek personal gain
in any way that harms the innocent.

People: **Those who seek to follow your way,
upholding its values, practicing its virtues,
shall know your tent as their dwelling place
and call your holy hill their home.**

adapted from James 1:17-22, 25-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from beyond us, coming to us from the Spirit of light and life, by whose eternal laws all life evolves. In fulfillment of the Spirit's own purpose, it gave us birth as a word of its truth, so that we would become like a fruit given to honor and serve the creation and its source...

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce what the Spirit needs on earth. To be the fruit the Spirit needs, rid yourselves of all that is rotten or diseased in you, weed out the rank growth of all that is not of the Spirit's way of love, and welcome with meekness the inner word that has the power to guide you safely to become your true Spirit-created, Spirit-serving self.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.... Those who look into the true and sacred laws of the universe, laws of freedom and love, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are spiritual, and do not bridle their egos but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God is like this: to care for orphan children and single mothers in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world of selfishness and greed.