



January 19, 2025
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

January 19, 2025
Second Sunday after Epiphany, Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday
MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

From the writings of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

I think this is what Jesus meant when he looked at his disciples one day and said, "I come not to bring peace but a sword." Now certainly he didn't mean he came to bring a physical sword. Certainly he didn't mean that he did not come to bring true peace. But Jesus was saying in substance... whenever I come, a conflict is precipitated between the old and the new. Whenever I come, tension sets in between justice and injustice.

We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of [people] willing to be co-workers with God.

The ultimate measure of [people] is not where [they] stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where [they] stand at times of challenge and controversy.

Gathering Music

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude "Deep River" African-American Spiritual The VTones

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.

Introit “23rd Psalm “ Bobby McFerrin

Welcome and Announcements and Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from Isaiah 49 and MLK, Jr.* Sylvia Smith

Leader: Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The Spirit of God called me before I was born.
It made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of its hand it hid me.

People: **And it said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”**
But I said, “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with my God.”

Leader: And now the Spirit says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

People: **This hour of history needs a dedicated circle of transformed nonconformists.**
Our planet teeters on the brink of annihilation.
We as Christians have a mandate to be nonconformists.

Leader: I do not minimize the complexity of the problems that need to be faced.... But I am convinced that we shall not have the will, the courage and the insight to deal with such matters unless... we are prepared to undergo a mental and spiritual reevaluation, a change of focus.

People: **Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.**

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All: **Now let us begin.**
Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter—but beautiful—struggle for a new world.
This is the calling of the children of God.

***Hymn** MH #333 I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

*from “Letter from Birmingham City Jail”
by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and fear of being nonconformists. There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period when the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.... Things are different now. The contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound... If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning.

Silent Prayer

Assurance of Pardon and Grace

Anthem “Precious Lord,” Thomas Dorsey The VTones and Choir

Scripture Luke 4:14-30

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Sermon A Thermostat of Transformed Nonconformists

***Hymn** PH #441 Once to Every Heart and Nation

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

What would Jesus do if he were here now? What would the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. do? What should we do as a church?

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

***Hymn** MH #134 Oh Mary Don't You Weep, Don't You Mourn

***Sung Benediction** "We Shall Overcome"

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

Postlude "Hallelujah, pelo tsa rona" South African

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

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!**

**We acknowledge that we are on the ancestral and unceded land of
the traditional caretakers, the Western Abenaki people.**

**We share the belief that the land and all life are gifts of the Spirit,
and our role is to honor and protect the Spirit's creation,
building a loving community that includes all.**

Past sermons are available on the back table.

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

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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 The **Heartfulness Circle** offers an informal meditation on Zoom every evening from 7:30 to 8:10 PM. See our website Welcome page for the Zoom link and details.

Next Concerts "Winter Wonders" held on Sundays 4:00-5:15 PM. Admission by donation, 20% goes to the church's Manheim Fund for the Arts.

- **February 9th** Crossing Bridges by Cassotto Duo (Jeremiah McLane, Accordion & Annemieke McLane)
- **March 9th** Waterways Rebecca Bailey, voice; Jim Schley, poet; Annemieke McLane, piano

Mission Committee Update: Responding to the Wildfires in California We have been heartbroken over the devastating wildfires in Southern California. We sent a donation to **World Central Kitchen** which is feeding victims of the fires as well as first responders. We heard from a Congregation member about the burning of the **Altadena Community Church, UCC** and sent them a donation along with a loving note of support. The Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC says: "Founded in 1940, Altadena became one of the first churches to declare itself Open and Affirming (#13 of the 1,906 certified), welcoming all people, including those in the LGBTQ+ community, into the full life of the church. For decades, its mission has been to embrace diversity, foster peace, and serve neighbors in need." We send our prayers to them and all who are impacted by the fires. With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

Haiku by Mel Goertz

Animals and birds
have gone home for the night.
Only a misty moon.

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