



January 26, 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 26, 2025

Third Sunday after Epiphany, Transition Sunday

MH=Methodist Hymnal; PH=Pilgrim Hymnal

“Remember, I am with you always, to the end of time.”

Matthew 28:20

Gathering Music

The Cantornote Church Musicians
Partita in C minor J.S. Bach Sarah Cantor, solo

Silent Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Tom Kinder

Prelude Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, Movement 1 J.S. Bach

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 “Rise Up O Flame” C. Praetorius

Welcome and Announcements and Call to Worship

Responsive Reading *from Psalm 84* Beth Randall

Leader: How lovely is your dwelling place,
O God, my hope and strength!

People: **My soul longs, indeed it faints for your courts;
my heart and my flesh
sing for joy to your living Spirit.**

Leader: Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself
where she may lay her young at your altars.

People: Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

Leader: Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

People: As they go through the desolate, dry valley
they make it a place of springs;
they bring the rain that ends the drought.

Leader: Your Spirit's power flowing through them
leads from blessing to blessing.

People: A day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.

Leader: I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God
than live in the tents of wickedness.

People: O God of hope and strength,
happy is everyone who trusts in you
and dwells in your love.

***Hymn** How Lovely Is Your Dwelling *hymn folder*

***Future Directions Vision as a Unison Reading** *from the pew card*

Silent Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon and Grace

Anthem "How Can I Keep from Singing" R. Lowry

Scripture from: Acts 4:32-35; I Corinthians 12:4-13;
and I John 3:16-18; 4:16b, 21

Sermon Looking Back and Looking Forward

***Hymn** Be Thou My Vision *hymn folder*

Sharing of Joys, Concerns, Prayer Requests and Reflections

Time of Prayer

Call to Offering

Liturgy of Leave Taking, Letting Go and Blessing *hymn folder*
Joey Hawkins, Moderator

***Recessional Hymn** Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos
(We Are Marching in the Light of God) *hymn folder*

The congregation will recess to the Parish Hall and form a circle for the benediction.

***Benediction**

** Those who are comfortably able may stand.*

*Please stay for refreshments and a celebration
of seven wonderful years together 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.*

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

Haiku by Mel Goertz

6 below zero
I put out seed.
Chickadee came and sang his song.

Thank you, Cantornote Church Musicians: Sarah Cantor, David Bar, Edward Cipullo, Mary Ann Hagen, Susan Hodges, Madeleine Garth, Scott Garth, Lorie Ishimatsu, Michael Lauer, Sara Lisniansky, Georgiana McReynolds, Brian Warnock, Kim Wass!

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
- **April 6th** Edvard Grieg, wonders of imagination. Annemieke McLane, piano solo

Mission Committee Update: Continuing Our Efforts to Help With California Wildfire Relief We continue to hold in our hearts our brothers and sisters who have suffered unimaginable loss in the California wildfires. On behalf of the church, we sent a donation last week to **World Central Kitchen** which is feeding victims of the fires as well as first responders. We heard that the **Altadena Community Church, UCC** burned, and sent them a donation with a note of support. The Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC says: “Altadena became one of the first churches to declare itself Open and Affirming, 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 have sent a donation to the **national United Church of Christ**, as well. They are providing “immediate relief and... helping displaced families, churches, and communities rebuild their lives with care and.... an equitable approach to their long-term recovery.” We send our prayers to all who are impacted by the fires. Please let us know if you have suggestions for the Mission Committee. We donate to vetted, non-profit organizations on our congregation’s behalf. Thank you! With love and gratitude, Danette Harris, Maggie Hooker and Cameron Speth

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Excerpts from Pastor Tom Kinder’s 1/14/25 Letter

My last Sunday will be January 26th and my last day of tying up loose ends will be January 31st.

As the Church Council wrote recently, they are working on a plan for the next stage, and until it is in place they will schedule “Seeking Spirit Sunday” speakers for February.

It feels good to be leaving the church in the hands of such extraordinary leadership—not only the Council but the Deacons and Mission Committee and everyone playing a role. We are a small village church blessed with a large pool of experienced, gifted and dedicated lay leaders.

There are ways in which the word “small” does not fit this church. We were full almost to capacity on Christmas Eve, our concerts are well attended, the building is full of activity almost every day of the year, and many generous people support our general, Deacons and Mission funds, enabling us to offer programs and support to people in need that expand our outreach far beyond our congregation’s size on a typical Sunday morning....

Thank you for these seven wonderful and eventful years! We have been through so much together, from the covid quarantine to becoming Open and Affirming to climate and anti-racism work to the election series to a steady stream of Mission actions to the community nurse and creative nursery to readings and book studies and Heartfulness meditations and children’s programs and profound times of reflection together on Sundays and extraordinary gifts of music and Deacon support of people in need, to mention only some of what we have experienced. What an amazing chapter in the life of this congregation!

Please know that after January 31st I will be thinking of you and this congregation often and sending love and light, and prayers that you flourish in the years ahead!

(Please see this letter on the table in the back of the sanctuary for the section on the boundaries we will keep as of February 1st.)

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