



# Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

April 2020 Newsletter

*"We seek not rest but transformation. We are dancing through each other as doorways."* Marge Piercy

**ALL ARE  
WELCOME!**

**Services**  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays  
10 am service

**WE GATHER IN  
BARRETT HALL  
for the FALL and  
WINTER**

***Coffee &  
Conversation  
following services***

**Summer** at the USS  
Church at 2 Justin  
Morrill Highway at  
Vt. Rte. 132 in  
South Strafford  
**Winter** at Barrett Hall

**Contact Information**

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Rev. Telos Whitfield  
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**2019-2020  
Church Officers**

Moderator –  
John Freitag  
Assistant Moderator –  
Marissa Mazzucco  
Treasurer –  
Suzanna Liepmann  
Secretary – open  
Trustees – Andrew  
Lane, Lee Funston  
and Katy Botsford

**VIRTUAL SERVICES, LEARNING and CONNECTION**

**We hope to be having conversations, listening and learning through the virtual world  
of the internet - details to follow...**

**Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am** - *Ancient Teachings of Lent and Passover... Ways of Caring For Ourselves and Each Other in a Crisis* led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.

**Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 10am** - *Is Our Strategic Plan Resilient and Relevant?* Exploring action steps in the face of crisis led by Tara Bamford

Many congregations are holding *virtual* worship services that can be accessed on their websites... Also, the UUA web site has a variety of resources for learning and inspiration.

*Message from our Minister*

*Dear God, please bless our home, the earth wherein we dwell. There are those who suffer here, and know not what to do. There are those who fear their lot, and know not where to go. Heal them all, dear God and bring them out of darkness into light.*

- Marianne Williamson

Dear ones, the world has changed dramatically in such a short span of time. We are all facing this crisis, a pandemic of large proportions, and we have all had our lives change, from having to practice social distance from each other, to working to stay healthy and safe. There is a lot of information to take in and there is fear. This is a challenging time like no other we have experienced as a community, and a nation. People were remembering back to Hurricane Irene and the rush to lend a hand to help people in need, the many hands that cleared roads, re-built homes, brought food and water - we co-created a stronger, more compassionate Vermont together. But this crisis is different. Although many of us long to be able to lend a hand, to touch and support someone who might be isolated or suffering, we are not able to, physically. So thank goodness for our telephones! We are blessed to be able to pick up the phone and call each other. And for the internet to allow us to continue to learn and stay connected to the stories of resilience and hope (and humor!) that being shared. This time of crisis offers an opportunity to deepen our practice of resilience, being able to roll with changes and stay committed to not only caring for ourselves as best we can, but reaching out to each other. This time offers new opportunities for creativity and learning. What was that art project I haven't had a chance to begin? What about that overflowing closet of belongings? What about that challenging recipe that requires time and attention to prepare? Writing, painting, making music or food, playing games, watching favorite movies, re-reading favorite books bring glimmers of light.

We need that lightness, we need that energy to ride out this storm. I find it comforting and an equalizer that we are all impacted by this crisis. It brings us together in unexpected ways.

We recall the meaning of Lent, offering a time of reflection and the vital importance of being part of a community. We can mourn on Good Friday with Jesus followers. We can celebrate with millions of others on Easter morning as we welcome the Light of each morning and the very real possibility that transformation both within and beyond us, can happen. Please take gentle care of yourselves these days and weeks ahead.

With care and gratitude, Rev. Telos

### ***Holy Days, Days to Remember in April***

*April 2<sup>nd</sup> - Ramanavami\*\* - Hindu*

*April 3<sup>rd</sup> - Laylat al Miraj - Islam*

*April 5<sup>th</sup> - Palm Sunday - Christian*

*April 8<sup>th</sup> - Hanuman Jayanti\*\* - Hindu*

*April 9 - 11<sup>th</sup> - Theravadin New Year - Buddhist*

*April 9 - 15<sup>th</sup> - Pesach\* - Jewish*

*April 9<sup>th</sup> - Mahavir Jayanti\*\* - Jain*

*April 9<sup>th</sup> - Maundy Thursday - Christian*

*April 10<sup>th</sup> - Good Friday - Christian*

*April 12<sup>th</sup> - Easter - Christian*

*April 12<sup>th</sup> - Lag B'Omer - Jewish*

*April 14<sup>th</sup> - Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) - Sikh*

*April 21<sup>st</sup> - Yom HaShoah - Jewish*

*April 21<sup>st</sup> - First Day of Ridvan\* - Baha'I*

*April 21<sup>st</sup> - Lailat al Bara'ah\* - Islam*

*April 24<sup>th</sup> - Ramadan begins\* - Islam*

*April 27<sup>th</sup> - Mahavir Jayanti\*\* - Jain*

*April 29<sup>th</sup> - Yom Ha'Atzmaut\* - Jewish*

*\*holiday begins the evening before.*

*\*\* Local and regional customs may vary on the dates.*

Strafford UU Society

Monthly Business Meeting

March 4, 2020

Members Present: Andrew L., John F., Katy, B., Lee F., Gayle G., Marissa M.

Meeting convened: 6:50 pm, John Presiding

#### **1. Opening words**

#### **2. Secretary's Report**

- a. Approved as circulated

#### **3. Treasurer's Report**

- a. none in March

#### 4. Minister's Report

- a. Review of services
- b. Discussion of Telos' schedule and areas of focus: Worship, pastoral care, newsletter, outreach/ community involvement/ colleague connections/ Administration

#### 5. Old Business

- a. Regional Meetings coming up - NNED District; VT/ Quebec Convention; UU General Assembly (June 24 - 28) in Providence, RI.
  - b. Further discussion on future direction for the congregation - we would like to go and how to get there. Worship, newsletter, community events, and other ideas exchanged.
- xxvi. Action Step: need to write a budget about this model**

#### 6. New Business

- a. Discussion of Joys and Concerns
- vii. Action Step: awareness and do some more front-loading of how to and how not to J&C. Having a standard preamble might be really helpful.**
- viii. Action Step: Put the preamble (laminated), opening and closing words as well? with the chalice and it is there for facilitator to use.**
- b. Windows Restoration - discussion of possible grants/ funding
  - c. Need to think about slate of officers for June:
    - i. Moderator:
    - ii. Assistant Moderator:
    - iii. Treasurer:
    - iv. Secretary: open
    - v. Trustee: Katy's three-year term is up

Adjourned 8:36 pm

**Our next Business Meeting will be a virtual meeting by video and/or by phone on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:45 - 8:15pm. Here is the information to participate: Joining Info: Join Hangouts Meet -**

**[meet.google.com/hcy-oeqc-qcg](https://meet.google.com/hcy-oeqc-qcg)**

**Join by phone: 1-516-274-8261 (PIN: 622288717)**

**Everyone is welcome to participate to share ideas and join the conversation around the present and future of our congregation.**

It has often been said that the only constant is change. With the leaving at the end of the year of our beloved minister Telos Whitfield, the Universalist Society of Strafford will once more in its long ( over 220 year ) history will be faced with challenge and change. It has also been often said that when one door closes another opens. We will be exploring the opportunities open to us at our monthly business meeting to which all are welcome to participate on Wednesday April 1 at 6:45 pm. Where we go now will also be the topic of our third Sunday gathering on April 19th. At that time, Tara Bamford, who led us in our envisioning process in 2018 will once again help us sort through our desires and options.

The mission statement and goals we came together upon then are included in the newsletter. They can serve as common ground upon which we can go forward. In the meantime , all are encouraged to think, talk and listen with others, and imagine what you would like for our congregation. No thought is too outrageous. Let us be as bold and courageous in our time as those who founded this church based on the radical notions of love and inclusiveness were so long ago!

John Freitag, moderator

**Universalist Society of Strafford**  
**Strategic Plan**  
***Adopted June 3, 2018***

## **I. Who We Are**

### **A. Our Role in the Larger Unitarian Universalist Community**

We are a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and actively seek opportunities to affirm and promote the seven UUA principles:

- 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 independent web of all existence, of which we are a part

We participate in the Northern New England District and Vermont-Quebec Universalist Convention.

### **B. Our Congregation**

We are a group of independent thinkers connected by shared values.

We are committed to living and promoting the seven UUA principles.

We stand up for social justice.

We are a caring, accepting community. We support and inspire each other through life's struggles and challenges, and celebrate the achievements and successes of members, visitors, families and friends.

Our gatherings provide a safe space to learn, explore, reflect, share ideas, grow, recharge and gain strength, comfort, and inspiration.

We invite everyone to participate in any way they are able and feel comfortable, from attending our gatherings, to music or presenting programs, leading discussions, sharing food at coffee hour, or helping with outreach.

Leadership has the opportunity to grow here. We nurture shared leadership. Contributions from those willing and able are appreciated, but not required.

We enjoy sharing music, singing, chalice lighting, joys and concerns and coffee hour.

We honor the deep roots of our history as the 2nd oldest Universalist congregation in Vermont and 4th oldest in the U.S.

We appreciate what has been created in the past and steward our 1833 church building as a symbol of the ideals which we still share.

We value equally the lessons of our elders and the perspectives of our youth.

We hold in high regard and strive to carefully use each dollar and each moment donated to support the work of the congregation.

## II. Where We Want To Go

### A. In January 2023, the Universalist Society of Strafford will have continued to grow as:

A growing, vibrant congregation that is open and welcoming to all people, feels emotionally safe, encourages participation, and is connected to the wider Unitarian Universalist Association, our communities, and the world.

A congregation that advocates for the climate and environment, social justice, and peace.

A church which provides a place for music, comfort, insight, inspiration, and spiritual renewal.

A caring community that is looking out for each other, strengthening our ties.

### B. Some of the ways we'll achieve this:

Build community by helping each other within our congregation and by providing service to others and addressing the needs of our world.

Recognize that caring, nurturing and support includes both the spiritual and the practical, and that increasing our connectedness outside of Sunday services is needed to really grow in this area.

Continue to hold minister-led 1st Sunday services, and 3rd Sunday programs and discussions that provide an opportunity for members to learn from each other and to benefit from each others' connections outside the congregation.

Make a concerted effort to bring in new ideas and welcome diverse thought.

Communicate effectively within the congregation, and with the Strafford community and surrounding towns.

Increase visibility in the community and in social media.

Use programs and events as outreach and education.

Be deliberate about making visitors feel welcome and comfortable.

Continue to increase our attention to universal accessibility.

Increase and judiciously invest our resources to ensure sustainability in moving forward.

Support members' related activities consistent with our principles and limited resources.

Continue to steward our church building to honor its heritage as a symbol of our shared values.