



# Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

December 2017 Newsletter

*“Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.”*

## WORSHIP SERVICES held at Barrett Hall

**Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10am. “Everyday Peace” Led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.** In this season of giving, we look for ways that we can spread peace in our daily lives through small and larger acts. We remember and celebrate traditions and stories of Advent and Hanukkah in this season of lights.

**Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 6pm. “Honoring the Light - Our Winter Solstice Celebration!”** We will gather once again at Lee Funstons home at 192 Justin Morrill Hwy in Strafford for a time of songs, readings, ritual and silence as we light a bonfire, share stories and honor this ancient tradition. If you can, bring a dish to share for our potluck supper and feel free to invite family and friends to join us!

**Sharing Holiday Cheer!** We are continuing our tradition of baking holiday cakes and offering them to folks who might need a bit of holiday sweetness. We’ll be cooking at Denise Thomson’ house in mid-December, so give us a call if you’d like to join us!

### *Message from our Minister*

I look forward to this season all year. I really do. What I love is that at the heart of this season of Advent, Hanukkah and Winter Solstice, we find Light. Light embodied in the lamp whose flame stayed lit for eight days, symbolizing the strength of the Jewish people. Light that came in the form of a star that came to rest above the humble stable where Jesus, called the “prince of peace” was born. Light flickering from the fires celebrating the beginning of winter for ancient pagan peoples all around the world. And of course, the twinkling lights that adorn people’s trees and hang on their porches, a symbol of our connection to each other that really can transcend differences and distance. The season holds so much. Candles are lit, food is prepared and shared; familiar songs are sung into the night air. And the waiting begins. Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation. Hanukkah, a time of reflection and honoring of community, and the solstice represents a powerful time in the earth calendar. Along with the common light shared by so many traditions and communities, there is a yearning for peace and for common understanding. The familiar carols can become tiresome as we find our way in and out of stores, so I need to remind myself to listen to the words: *“The first Noel, the angels did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields where they lay; where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.”* Hard-working shepherds tending to their flocks just as our farmers and local businesses tend to their work. There is such a sense of peace in many of the carols, and they can bring a smile or a tear as we remember friends, meals shared and past years. We can nourish this sense of peace and community. We live in uncertain and difficult times, as people perhaps always have and sometimes the simple gift of a conversation or one of our holiday cakes can have a profound impact. Our gift might be just what someone needed to help them through a difficult time. I hear the echoes of those familiar words from our hymnal by Joseph and Nathan Segal: *“From you I receive, to you I give, Together we share and from this we live.”*

ALL ARE

WELCOME!

Services

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays  
at 10 am

*Childcare and  
spiritual exploration  
offered for our  
young ones.*

*Coffee &  
Conversation  
following services*

We hold our  
**Summer Services**  
in our Church at  
2 Justin Morrill  
Highway, Vt. Rte. 132  
in South Strafford.

**Fall and Winter  
Services** across the  
street at Barrett Hall.

### Contact Information

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**2016-2017**

### Church Officers

Moderator –  
John Freitag  
Assistant Moderator –  
Marissa Mazzucco  
Treasurer –  
Suzanna Liepmann  
Secretary – open  
Trustees – Fred Wolfe,  
Andrew Lane, and  
Dick Josler

It is true and for me, this season of lights really can be an opportunity to give and receive in ways we might have known were possible. May we look beyond the surface of holiday preparations, to find the true meanings and may the *Beautitudes of Christmastide* by David Rhys Williams help us see:

*Blessed are they who have vision enough to behold a guiding star  
in the dark mystery that girdles the earth.*

*Blessed are they who have imagination enough to detect the music  
of celestial voices in the midnight hours of life;*

*Blessed are they who have greatness enough to become  
at times as a little child;*

*Blessed are they who have zest enough to take delight in simple things;*

*Blessed are they who have wisdom enough to know  
that the kingdom of heaven is very close at hand,*

*and that all may enter who have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand.*

May this holiday season and new year offer each of us the opportunity to deepen our connection to this community of faith and love, bring us peace of mind and heart, and allow us to share our own strength and inspiration with each other and everyone we encounter.

Blessings, Rev. Telos

*Holy Days, Days to Remember*

Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> - First Day of Hanukkah

Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> - Last Day of Hanukkah

Thursday, December 21<sup>th</sup> - Winter Solstice

Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Day

Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup> - Kwanzaa Begins

*Planning for the Next Five Years*

Five years ago, our congregation spent several Sunday mornings developing a brief strategic plan describing who we are as a congregation, our goals for the coming five years, and some of the ways we wanted to work toward those goals.

Earlier this year, a third Sunday discussion was held to look over that original document and brainstorm on needed updates. November's third Sunday discussion focused on the first draft of an updated document. The focus continues to be on growing our congregation as a caring community of independent thinkers, grounded in the seven UUA principles. Congregation members will be receiving a second draft of the plan to review prior to the next discussion on January 21.

For more information, please feel free to contact Tara Bamford at [tebamford@gmail.com](mailto:tebamford@gmail.com) or 802-785-9858.

Strafford Universalist Society - Business Meeting Notes

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017

Members Present: Dick, Suzanna, Katy, Marissa, John, Telos, and Andrew

Convened: 6:45 pm

Secretary Report: Minutes accepted as circulated

Minister's Report: Highlights shared, and report submitted to group ahead of time

- Thoughts to share:
  - Meeting with Therese and Tom Kinder to plan Thanksgiving service
  - Tom is eager to do some additional planning of sharing of stuff together
  - Support for Dick H. as he looks to continued healing and transitions.
  - Upcoming worship - Tara B. is leading our 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Nov. to continue vision discussion; Community Thanksgiving service; Winter Solstice Celebration on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in December.

### *Old Business:*

- John's letter to list serve "Where we are, where we are going, who we are"
- Andrew checking wireless mic; John moving sound system to Barrett Hall
- Andrew will do audit of books with Suzanna
- Handicap Ramp - Thanks to Dick J.'s guidance, it came out beautifully!
  - Make corner of ramp more visible as drive up the driveway.
  - We should send a photo and update to the chalice lighters committee; post on our Facebook page.
  - As part of visioning process, idea of memorial, connect to our early history; plantings
- Guest at Table boxes to support UU Service Committee introduced at first November service
- Pledges for 2017-2018 - article in newsletter again; follow visioning; officers share why they pledge.
- Concerns about attendance - greater publicity; send PR to wider circles - list serves for nearby communities; Valley News and other publications; Telos to share reflection on Strafford list serve.
  - Discussion about our church and what people see - possibly a banner tying to our broader denomination (UUSC, UUA, "Stand on the Side of Love")
  - Wayside pulpit/sandwich board discussion. Print UU principles to post in wayside pulpit and better communicate when/where we meet. (John, Marissa and Telos)

### *New Business:*

- A small window upstairs has a hole in glass; will only repair if we get a grant.
- Suzanna proposed reading *Daring Democracy: Vision and practical guidance for justice making work in the public square* to connect to denomination; facilitate conversation about place in community social action movement. Put in newsletter to gauge interest; reach out to community, discussions at library.
- Should we offer a package deal with Barrett Hall for summer weddings?

Adjourned 8:00 pm

Our Next Board Meeting will be on **Wed. Dec. 6 at 6:30pm**, location to be announced.

Ask us for details and join us if you can. We welcome everyone's ideas and involvement!

### ***Supporting the Guest At Your Table Program.***

For many years, we have supported the *Guest At Your Table* program which supports the humanitarian and environmental social justice efforts of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in the United States and around the world. Look for the colorful and illuminating cardboard boxes at a Sunday coming up that you can take home and place your extra change in over the next few weeks. We will collect the boxes and send in our contributions at our third Sunday service in January. One story of hope that the UUSC is focusing on this year is that of Aung Kyaw Moe who spent his early adulthood working for freedom and human rights in various regions of the world, but then decided to return home to northern Rakhine State in Burma (also known as Myanmar.) In order to encourage participatory democracy and coexistence between different ethnic groups, Moe founded the Center for Social Integrity (CSI), one of UUSC's nine partners working to promote human rights in Burma. Believing that, in the face of Burma's tension and violence, "the only way forward is for youth to work together," Aung Kyaw Moe and CSI created a leadership development program for Burmese youth with funding provided by the UUSC.

Throughout its history, UUSC has advanced human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies. Let us continue to be inspired by this work and support efforts that create lasting and powerful change. Look for your GAYT box next time you're at church!

**Participating in the 2017-18 UUA Common Read - *Daring Democracy*** - *Several of us have expressed interest in reading and discussing a book together, and Daring Democracy might be a good choice. Below is background on the book from the UUA web site:* With our democracy in crisis, many Americans are frightened and uncertain. So, the legendary activist Frances Moore Lappé, and organizer-scholar Adam Eichen teamed up to tell the under-reported story of a "movement of movements" arising to tackle the roots of the crisis. The authors view the Trump presidency as a symptom of a shocking anti-democracy movement and expose the events that drove us to this crisis. But their focus is on solutions: how people from all backgrounds, committed to an array of social-justice causes, are creating a canopy of hope, what Lappé and Eichen call the "democracy movement." To save the democracy we thought we had, argue the authors, we must take our civic life to a place it's never been. The arising democracy movement's innovative and inspiring strategies are enabling millions of Americans to feel part of something big, historic, and positive. *Democracy is not only possible but essential to meet the most basic human needs for power, meaning, and connection; joining the democracy movement is thus a daring and noble undertaking calling each of us. Let Suzanna or Telos know if you'd be interested in a discussion series on Daring Democracy and what steps we might take as a community...*

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*From our Treasurer, Suzanna Liepmann*

As we come to the end of the year, it is time to reflect on what this community means to you, and to renew your commitment to the Universalist Society of Strafford. As treasurer, my reflections include gratitude for all of you who commit to a financial contribution at the beginning of the year by making a formal pledge. But even more important, is the fact that for the second year in a row, our collective contributions exceeded our budget! Over the past year your support has enabled us to continue to protect our beautiful building, improve accessibility and welcome all to share in services, events, weddings and funerals. In the coming year, we are committed to completing the ramp project, repairing the carpet joints to make the sanctuary a physically safe place, working toward paying our minister a living wage, creating safe spaces for discussions, and taking advantage of some of the many resources offered by the regional and national Unitarian Universalist associations. With your renewed support we can accomplish all this and more! As our annual fundraising campaign continues, please show your support for the Universalist Society of Strafford with a financial pledge.

As always, pledges may be made in any amount that fits your budget and may be fulfilled on a schedule that works for you. Please return the pledge card below with your pledge commitment. Thank you!

Universalist Society of Strafford  
Annual Fund  
2017/2018

Enclosed is my/our gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Church

I/we pledge \$1 per day to the Church, for a total of \$365

I/we pledge \$50 per month to the Church, for a total of \$600

I/we pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Church for the year, to be paid \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date