



# Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

## December 2019 Newsletter

*"To love and be loved is to feel the sun from both sides."* David Viscott

**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.  
Church and Barrett are  
handicap accessible

### **Contact Information**

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### **2019-2020 Church Officers**

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

### **Worship Services**

**Sunday, December 1st - *Following the Light*** led by Rev. Telos Whitfield. Light comes in many forms - from creativity and strength, to wisdom and comfort. In this season of Advent, we will prepare to welcome light into our lives, and into our community.

**Sunday, December 15th - *Our Winter Solstice Celebration***, 5:30pm at Lee Funston's home at 192 Justin Morrill Hwy. in Strafford. Invite your friends and family to our yearly gathering, and join in sharing music and words, silence and ritual as we light our fire and welcome the light!

### *Message from our Minister*

*"In this holiday season may we find peace inside ourselves;  
May we be peace for those around us, and may we renew our commitment  
To bring peace with justice to our community and the world.  
May we be peace."* chalice lighting by David Breeden

This time of year can be challenging, busy and emotional on many levels, so finding peace inside and around us can be a welcome gift. There is so much occurring in the world, from protests and struggles to political strife and fears that divide us. This season of Advent, of Hannukah, offer opportunities for contemplation, and lighting of candles in anticipation of a new season. We need light in the darkness to guide our way but also as symbols of hope, wisdom, compassion and peace. These may seem like lofty and idealistic ideas but they can be brought down to earth as practical realities if we choose to see them that way. How do we find hope in a challenging time? How do we practice peace when we feel frantic and scattered? How do we rely on our own wisdom to make decisions? The small candles in people's windows, our own chalice lit to bring us together and recall us to our faith, the solstice bonfire we light and send songs up into the darkness, these are all symbols of light that can lift our spirits and remind us what is important. Advent is a time of waiting and anticipation of a new life coming into the world, hope for justice and compassion in the symbol of a humble birth to young people fleeing persecution. The Christmas story is a timeless one that can often be framed as one of compassion for the stranger. The innkeeper took pity on the young couple and offered them the stable for shelter. We offer compassion to strangers that might come across our path - a newcomer who doesn't know their way around; a person whose stranded next to their car; someone who needs a kind word, a bit of light sent their way.

The Hannukah story is also a timeless one. "Light One Candle", a Hanukkah song in our hymnal: *"Light one candle for all we believe in, that anger won't tear us apart. And light one candle to bring us together with peace as the song in our heart."* [Singing the Living Tradition, Beacon Press, Boston, 1993] As we light our candles, our chalice, our Solstice bonfire, our tree lights, we can imagine all that these lights can symbolize. For it is up to each of us to help spread light.

In this season of lights, may we remember that we can offer peace and hope in the form of simple gestures. In this time of waiting, may we remain patiently committed to justice and care for those struggling and worn ones among us. In this time of celebration, let us lift up all that we have to be grateful for, and offer our gifts to anyone who comes along our path. In peace and hope, Happy Solstice, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy Kwanzaa to all. *Let us honor and celebrate the Light, together!*  
Blessings, Rev. Telos

***Holy Days, Days to Remember - December***

*December 1<sup>st</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> - Advent - Christian*

*Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> - Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) - Buddhism*

*Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> - Feast Day - Our Lady of Guadalupe - Catholic Christian*

*Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> - Posadas Navidenas - Hispanic Christian*

*Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> - Winter Solstice - Yule - Litha\* - Wicca/Pagan (Northern & Southern Hemispheres)*

*Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> - Hanukkah - Jewish*

*Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Eve - Christian*

*Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> - Christmas - Christian*

*Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> - Zarathosht Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra)\*\* - Zoroastrian*

*Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> - Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> - Kwanzaa - Pan-African holiday*

*Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> - Watch Night - Christian*

*Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> - New Year's Eve*

\*holiday begins the evening before.

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

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**Supporting our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee - Guest At Your Table  
2019-2020 Theme: *Women Leaders, Strong Communities***

Since the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's (UUSC) founding 79 years ago, our work has been shaped and sustained by women's leadership. Today, we are proud to partner with women leaders who are increasing representation for women in their communities, while strengthening access to justice for all. During this year's Guest at Your Table program, please join us to learn more about women leaders from UUSC partner organizations taking on some of today's greatest human rights challenges. Here is a window into the leaders and their important work: A climate activist from Kiribati, Pelenise is responding boldly to climate change in the Pacific; Marta Velásquez is working to support victims of violence and eradicate violence against women in Honduras; Wai Wai is helping prevent violence and bridge ethnic and religious divides in Burma; and in Mexico and the U.S., Monica is using the arts to bolster resiliency and leadership among migrants.

There are GAYT boxes available at our church services to place change and other money in; and we will send in our collective donation in January. To supporting the social justice efforts of our faith!

The Board met at Lee Funston's home on Wed. Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> and had a potluck dinner and conversation sharing our hopes and aspirations for the future of the Universalist Society.

**Our next Business Meeting will be Wed. December 4th, 6:30pm at Lee Funston's home at 192 Justin Morrill Hwy. in Strafford. Everyone is welcome!**

If you have questions or ideas, ways you want to be involved, please contact our board members: Moderator, John Freitag, Assistant Moderator, Marissa Mazzucco, Treasurer, Suzanna Liepmann, or our Trustees, Katy Botsford, Lee Funston and Andrew Lane; or our minister, Rev. Telos Whitfield.

*Thank you for being a part of this community!*

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*Into the Darkest Hour*  
by Madeline L'Engle

It was a time like this,  
War & tumult of war,  
a horror in the air.  
Hungry yawned the abyss-  
and yet there came the star  
and the child most wonderfully there.

It was time like this  
of fear & lust for power,  
license & greed and blight-  
and yet the Prince of bliss  
came into the darkest hour  
in quiet & silent light.

And in a time like this  
how celebrate his birth  
when all things fall apart?  
Ah! Wonderful it is  
with no room on the earth  
the stable is our heart.

*Appeals Letter from our Moderator, John Freitag*

Over the past year church business meetings have focused on how our current mode of operation is not financially sustainable. There simply are not enough funds coming from collections, fundraisers, grants and our endowment to cover both the cost of our ¼ time minister and maintenance of our building and grounds without continued drawing down of our endowment.

At our annual meeting this June it was decided to continue as is for one more year with the understanding that unless collections increased by 50% we would need to make changes. At our business meeting in September it was decided that we would assess where we stood at the 6 month mark in January and make a decision ( based on our financial picture at that point) whether to continue or adopt a new model of operation. If we need to consider new models, every effort will be made to include members and friends in this discussion.

Now is that time that members and friends to play a critical role in how we proceed. Please fill out the pledge form with this letter. Your response will determine what direction we take.

Finally, rather than give my own feelings on why the Universalist Society of Strafford is important, I am including this reading from our hymnal by Kenneth Patton:

“This house is for the ingathering of nature and human nature.

It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle.

It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person.

It offers a platform for the free voice, for declaring both in times of security and danger, the full and undivided conflict of opinion.

It is a house of truth-seeking, where scientists can encourage devotion in their quest, where mystics can abide in a community of searchers.

It is a house of art, adorning its celebrations with melodies and handiworks.

It is a house of prophecy, outrunning times past and times present in visions of growth and progress.

This house is a cradle for dreams, the workshop of our common endeavors.”

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**Universalist Society of Strafford  
Annual Fund  
2019/2020**

- 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