



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

February 2020 Newsletter

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

**ALL ARE
WELCOME!**

Services
1st and 3rd 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

John Freitag
(802) 765-4003
P.O. Box 26
S. Strafford, VT
05070
www.strafforduu.org
or on Facebook
Rev. Telos Whitfield
(802) 376-4977
telosw@gmail.com

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, February 2nd at 10am - *Honoring our Lunar Heritage* led by Marissa Mazzucco. In what has become a yearly tradition in honor of Marissa's Chinese heritage, she will lead us through some of the meanings behind the celebration of the Chinese New Year and reflections from her family's own celebrations.

Sunday, February 16th at 10am - *African American Voices and the Vote - Saving Democracy* led by Rev. Telos Whitfield. February is Black History month, and this year marks the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment, which gave black men the right to vote; it also marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, and culmination of the women's suffrage movement. We honor the historic voting rights struggles; recognize the ongoing challenges experienced by people of color today and explore democracy.

Sunday, February 9th, 3:30pm - *Continuing the Conversation - Climate Crisis Actions*, UU Congregation of Upper Valley in Norwich, VT. (320 Rt. 5 S. across from the Family Place.) co-hosted by Upper Valley UU congregations. Open to everyone!

Message from our Minister

"Love is the very foundation, beauty and fulfillment of life. If we dive deep enough into ourselves, we will find that the one thread of universal love ties all beings together. As this awareness dawns within us, peace alone will reign."

Mātā Amritānandamayī

What if love really was the most powerful force in the universe? It would make Valentine's Day and all of the red hearts and flowers take on a whole new meaning. It might give each of us pause as we imagine how we might use the power of our own love to bring change, healing, and transformation into our own lives and the lives of every person, every creature, living thing that we encounter. Imagine the change that everyday kindness can offer. It certainly lightens the load, lessens the fears and broadens the horizon of possibility. Mata Amritanandamayī, often called Amma (Mother) is a Hindu spiritual leader, guru and humanitarian, and known to her followers as the "hugging saint." She has embraced more than 33 million people over thirty years, and has a multi-million dollar foundation that feeds, clothes and educates people all over the world. When I read of her work, I found a woman who had been a follower of Amma for 19 years and who offered this perspective - that many, many followers attribute their peace and serenity, the love that they receive from Amma to be from coming from her, but instead, it might be their own love reflected back to themselves. The power resides inside of us, and we can choose to share that kindness, that love in as many ways as we can, for it will only increase. Sometimes though, it can feel like work to be kind, to listen patiently, to stay open and wait for that energy of compassion. Why is it hard? Does it again come back to what we are reflecting, to how compassionate or patient we've been with ourselves? It can be hardest to offer ourselves that love, to suspend judgment, to trust, to forgive. Aah... perhaps Valentines Day needs to include ourselves!

February is also honored as Black History month, and the focus this year is remembering and honoring the struggles for the right to vote. There is much history to be remembered, healing to be offered and work to be celebrated. Now is the time to take our right to vote seriously and to explore ways we can preserve and maintain the democratic process, ensuring that every person has the power to use their voice and vote. To honoring the power of love and the power of a true democracy.

Blessings, Rev. Telos

Holy Days, Days to Remember - January

*February 2nd - Candlemas - Presentation of Christ in the Temple - Christian
Imbolc - Lughassad* - Wicca/Pagan - Northern and Southern hemispheres*

Four Chaplains Sunday - Interfaith

February 3rd - Setsebun-sai (beginning of Spring) - Shinto

February 5th - Chinese New Year - Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist

February 8th - Nirvana Day - Buddhist

February 14th - St. Valentine's Day - Christian

*February 15th - Nirvana Day** - Buddhist - Jain*

*February 22nd - Maha Shivaratri** - Hindu*

February 23rd - Transfiguration Sunday - Christian

February 25th - Shrove Tuesday - Christian

February 26th - Ash Wednesday - Lent begins - Christian

Intercalary Days begin - Baha'i

*holiday begins the evening before.

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

*

*

*

**Thank you to Everyone for Supporting our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee -
Guest At Your Table Program 2019-2020 Theme: *Women Leaders, Strong Communities***

We invite you to join in

Continuing the Conversation

Responding with 2020 Vision to the Climate Crisis

Sunday, January 9th at 3:30pm

At the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Upper Valley

320 Route 5 S. in Norwich across from the Family Place

For more information, contact Zara Reeves at sdreeves1@gmail.com

or check our website strafforduu.org and our facebook page

Sponsored by Unitarian Universalist Congregations of the Upper Valley
in Strafford, Norwich, Woodstock and Hartland

Climate Justice Conference

Workshop - Churches and Communities Involvement

Resources: www.UUA.org; www.UUME.org (UU Ministry For Earth); www.350.org

[Resources and Actions I shared at the workshop I led with Rev. Tom Kinder at our Climate Justice Conference]

UU Ministry For Earth - Respect Earth - Restore Earth -Renew Spirit

UU Ministry for Earth is here to empower and resource you for faith-grounded and accountable action for climate and environmental justice. Top resources related to the issue areas UUMFE focuses on, including climate change, ecological justice, energy, food justice, front-lines solidarity, social justice and human rights, and sustainability.

This is a wonderful resource and where I have gathered much of the information I am about to share.

Here is an Outline of the Actions:

*Celebrating and Honoring Earth Day

*Climate Strike Movement - April 22 - 24th Action in NYC / UU-UNO Spring Seminar

*Green Sanctuary Program for UU Congregations

*Hosting the Documentary Film - The Condor and the Eagle

*Honoring World Water Day - March 22

*Chase Divestment Movement / #CutTheChase Challenge - Divest from Chase Bank

*Strengthen Local Climate Commitments (SLCC) campaign - Half of the US population and **800 Unitarian Universalist Congregations** are in communities where Mayors and Governors have promised to achieve Climate Commitments.

***Honoring Biodiversity Sunday** — May 17th, 2020 — sits between Endangered Species Day on May 15th, and the International Day for Biodiversity on May 22nd.

*Join the Climate Reality Project

The UU Ministry the Earth and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Green Sanctuary Program & UU United Nations Office have launched the *Create Climate Justice* initiative, with three current **priority focus areas**:

- 1. Strengthening Unitarian Universalist communications and mutual support networks for Climate Justice**
- 2. Mobilizing UUs in solidarity with Indigenous front-line communities**
- 3. Supporting the Just Transition to an ecological civilization through partnerships and civic engagement**

Congregations gather to celebrate and take action on behalf of our earth in many ways. Let us honor, protect and save our earth and all of its creatures, together.

Members Present: Andrew L., John F., Suzanna L., Katy B. , Rev. Telos (minister), Marissa M., Tara B., Lee F., Rev. Paul Sawyer (guest)
Meeting convened: 6:40pm , John Presiding

1. Opening words, Telos leading

2. Discussion with Paul Sawyer from the Northern New England District

- a. Topic of discussion: the upcoming vote to dissolve the district and merge those resources with the New England Region of the UUA.
- b. Discussion, questions, thoughts shared about this change, and what it would mean
- c. NNED District Annual Meeting will be in late April and we should plan on some folks attending.

3. Secretary's Report

- a. Approved as circulated

4. Treasurer's Report

- a. Update on pledges
- b. Review of financial documents.
- c. Motion: To eliminate climate symposium segregated funds and merge funds with social action funds. This will be reflected on future balance statements. Approved unanimously.
- d. Currently we have received 48% of pledge/ collection goal.
- e. Even if we meet our revenue targets, we are still deficit spending about \$3500. The decision - whether to try to further increase donations and revenue to get to a balanced budget.
- f. Question: Can we further increase our revenue that allows for this? Do we need to cut expenses? Do we reduce building maintenance to keep 1/4 time minister? Do we reduce minister time at the cost of spiritual growth?
- g. Approve financial statements: approved unanimously.

5. Minister's Report

- a. Worship service schedule
- b. Social action/ community involvement - Co-hosting Climate Justice Conference on Jan. 11th
- c. Pastoral care

6. Old Business

- a. Discussion around future of the congregation - connections to mission, future, goals, budget, and energy
 - i. Discussion of various options and possibilities:
 1. Continue as we are
 2. Pair down areas of the budget
 3. Status Quo but have a safety valve of a draw from endowment to cover possible shortfall next year.
 4. Sell the building, give away, endowment transfer for portion to protect building and portion to keep with "congregation"
 5. Reduce to "pastoral care and organizing" minister
 6. Summer only
 7. Heat pump in the building? More multi-purpose. (Carriage shed-tiny church)

8. Find a number of new members who want to contribute
9. Let congregation rest for a while. Maintain building, but not hold services (dormancy from back in the day).
 - ii. Agreed that board and trustees want to pursue some version of keeping the congregation going and not in dormancy.
 - iii. Topic that must be discussed and resolved in February - role of minister

Adjourned 10:07 pm

Our next Business Meeting will be Wed. February 5th, 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!

Now is the Time to Make your Pledge

The board and trustees are continuing their conversations (based on our financial picture) about 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.

* * *

**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