



# Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

## February 2019 Newsletter

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

### Worship Services

**Sunday, Feb. 3rd *Creativity Can Save Lives* led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.** From illness to loss, fear and confusion, finding our way to the heart of our own creativity can be a life-saver. It has saved many lives, and transformed many others. Words and images, quilts and savory dishes, music and story, creativity lives in us and needs to be shared.

**Sunday, Feb. 17th *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 the meanings of the Chinese New Year and the symbolism of our own lunar heritage.

#### *Message from our Minister*

*"Poetry is a life-cherishing force. For poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary as bread in the pockets of the hungry."*

Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook*

Imagine words being as necessary as bread in the pockets of the hungry! Imagine the power that creativity holds to heal and transform a life. There are thousands, even millions of ways to be creative; in fact, every one of us holds that individual, unique spark. Often, creativity is seen and honored when a physical piece is formed - a painting, a quilt, a poem or a novel. And we celebrate that artist or writer, placing them in a special category - they are the creative ones. But in fact, each one of us can and actually needs to find a path or way to express ourselves, especially in the deep of winter. Poet Mary Oliver was a magnificent, real and needed voice, offering thousands of images, feelings and questions to the world, but perhaps her greatest gift was the way in which she highlighted and then offered the beauty back to us, challenging us to find what we love, express who we are, and always, always, notice. Notice the incredible intricacy of the world. She almost seemed to be holding me by my shoulders and turning me toward everything that is alive. There is pain and loss, her words acknowledged this reality; but there is also sweetness and humor, love and beauty. The very real and intimate details that we can't afford to miss, or we might find ourselves waking up one morning feeling like we are only half-living, watching our life go by without us. Our creative life can help us back to the heart of our lives; and our relationships and connections with people, animals, words and sounds that are so incredibly unique and ultimately universal. Oliver would invite, and she would challenge. In *"When Death Comes,"* Mary Oliver wrote:

*When it's over, I want to say: all my life*

*I was a bride married to amazement.*

*I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.*

*When it's over, I don't want to wonder*

*if I have made of my life something particular, and real.*

*I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened  
or full of argument.*

*I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.*

#### 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 – Katy Botsford  
Andrew Lane and  
Lee Funston

In an article written by Margalit Fox published in The New York Times on January 17<sup>th</sup>, she wrote: “For her abiding communion with nature, Ms. Oliver was often compared to Walt Whitman and Robert Frost. For her quiet, measured observations, and for her fiercely private personal mien (she gave many readings but few interviews, saying she wanted her work to speak for itself), she was likened to Emily Dickinson.

Ms. Oliver often described her vocation as the observation of life, and it is clear from her texts that she considered the vocation a quasi-religious one. Her poems — those about nature as well as those on other subjects — are suffused with a pulsating, almost mystical spirituality, as in the work of the American Transcendentalists or English poets like William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins.”

Fox listed the multiple awards and distinctions that Oliver had received and then wrote that “All this, combined with the throngs that turned out for her public readings, conspired to give Ms. Oliver, fairly late in life, the aura of a reluctant, bookish rock star.” That *is* the way she was to me when I had the honor of seeing and hearing her at a UU General Assembly years ago. She walked onto our stage in a long blue shirt that she seemed too big for her small shoulders, gray hair hanging about her face. And then, then she proceeded to give us all an intimate and profound window into how she saw the world. *Thank you Mary Oliver* for your words, your courage in seeing and sharing every beautiful and difficult detail. You have blessed and challenged us all to find and share the heart of our lives with the world.

with love, Rev. Telos

We honor and remember **Poet Mary Jane Oliver** who died on January 17<sup>th</sup> at the age of 83.



The poet Mary Oliver with her dog, Ricky, 2013  
at her home in Hobe Sound, Fla.  
Throughout her work, Ms. Oliver was occupied with  
Intimate observations of the natural world.  
Credit Angel Valentin for The New York Times

### *The Swan*

Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black river?  
Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air -  
An armful of white blossoms,  
A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned  
into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a bank of lilies,  
Biting the air with its black beak?  
Did you hear it, fluting and whistling  
A shrill dark music - like the rain pelting the trees - like a waterfall  
Knifing down the black ledges?  
And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds -  
A white cross Streaming across the sky, its feet  
Like black leaves, its wings Like the stretching light of the river?  
*And did you feel it, in your heart, how it pertained to everything?*  
*And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?*  
*And have you changed your life?*

Mary Oliver

\* \* \*

### ***Holy Days, Days to Remember***

*February 2<sup>nd</sup> - Candlemas - Christian*

*February 2<sup>nd</sup> - Lughassad - Wicca/Pagan - Northern and Southern hemispheres*

*February 2<sup>nd</sup> - Saint Brigid of Kildare - Celtic Christian*

*February 3<sup>rd</sup> - Setsebun-sai (beginning of Spring) - Shinto*

*February 5<sup>th</sup> - Chinese New Year - Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist*

*February 8<sup>th</sup> - Nirvana Day - Buddhism*

*February 14<sup>th</sup> - St. Valentine's Day - Christian*

*February 26<sup>th</sup> - Intercalary Days begin - Baha'I*

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Staying connected to our members and friends...

Dick Holbrook

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