



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

February 2018 Newsletter

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

WORSHIP SERVICES held at Barrett Hall

Sunday, Feb. 4th, 10am. "Love and Justice - Hand In Hand" led by Rev. Telos Whitfield
There are social justice movements that have inspired revolutionary change and often they are grounded in love. We will explore this illusive and all-powerful force through ancient and modern examples. How can we harness and share this energy as individuals and communities?

Sunday, Feb. 18th, 10am. "Exploring Our Lunar Heritage" led by Marissa Mazzucco
Marissa's continues to explore her Chinese heritage, and will bring some of the traditions around the Chinese or Lunar new year (Feb 16th) and the spring festival to you. 2018 will be the year of the Earth Dog and I will provide you with a snippet of what your horoscope says for the following year. New years is all about family and friends and reconnecting, so come and connect with us.

Sunday, Feb. 18th, 3 - 6pm. Marissa M. invites us all to her Chinese New Year Celebration at the Vershire Town Hall. There will be delicious foods to share and a time to honor this day and her family heritage. If you were not able to attend her worship service, *Exploring Our Lunar Heritage*, this will be an opportunity for you to explore with her and the Vershire Community! She is also leading cooking classes the first 3 Thursdays in February - 1st, 8th, 15th, so contact her if you are interested in attending.

Message from our Minister

"Love will guide us, peace has tried us, hope inside of us will lead the way...."

Sometimes it feels easy to let love guide us. We recognize in the moment how nourishing and rewarding extending kindness, showing compassion for another can feel. But love can't be reserved for our family and dear friends, it is too powerful and necessary a force. Antoine De Saint-Exupery wrote that *"Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction."* Herein lies our choice. Love is often framed as an energy to be strengthened and nurtured among people who have committed to each other in relationship. But what about striving to look beyond each other out into the world, sending love and care to the far reaches? We hear of violence and struggle and need but it is often happening in faraway communities, people we do not know and may not understand, even might feel a bit afraid of. Living into our principle of an *"interconnected web of human existence of which we are a part"* seeks to transcend distance and difference. To love is to care, to feel compassion and to look for ways to act. What can we do? First we can acknowledge this intimate and ongoing relationship between love and justice. The causes that many of us hold dear are borne out of a relationship or experience that has brought us closer, has led us into or sprung out of our heart. Whether it is a love of wilderness that leads us to help in preserving wild places and endangered species, or a belief that everyone deserves justice and fair treatment, so we work toward equal wages, restorative justice or compassion for refugees. We can see these commitments as being Universalist at their very core.

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.

Contact Information

John Freitag
(802) 765-4003
P.O. Box 26
S. Strafford, VT
05070

www.strafforduu.org

Rev. Telos Whitfield
(802) 376-4977
telosw@gmail.com

2016-2017 Church Officers

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

Everyone is worthy of love and acceptance; no one is beyond or outside this circle. This is a belief we hold dear and it is inspiring and radical too! These ancient and revolutionary Universalist beliefs that set our ancestors at odds with dominant church doctrine continue to guide us at a deep level. And this commitment is so needed today. Love and justice often exist hand in hand. Out of our personal commitment to live a life of justice and compassion, we help to strengthen both of these forces and help to gently move the world toward greater compassion. And it really does begin with our daily interactions, and it's not always easy. Fatigue and frustration, and at times a lack of hope in the face of so much that seems impossible to remedy, we need to remember this circle of care we live in. Let us be there for each other in difficult times and when it's time to celebrate. I recently watched an inspiring PBS program where friends were reunited after seventy years, young ones who had met around the time of World War II and had lost track of each other as they lives took very different paths. One shared that they would always be "united in love and memory" but to see her friend again, to hug the daughter of his dear "honorary" father, these stories gave me hope and made me smile. I was awed at how powerful our connections can be, how they truly can not only lift us up as individuals but inspire others. Let us walk hand in hand with each other in love and justice, for there is no more important and inspiring way to live. We are in this experience together.

Blessings, Rev. Telos

Crafting Our Vision, Together - Planning for the Next Five Years

We have held three discussions over the past two months updating the strategic plan developed five years ago. It describes who we are as a congregation, our goals for the coming five years, and some of the ways we wanted to work toward our vision. The focus continues to be on growing our congregation as a caring community of independent thinkers, grounded in the seven UUA principles. Congregation members received a second draft of the plan that we discussed on Sunday, January 21 led by Tara Bamford and we'll continue to finalize our vision and strategic plan looking to the years ahead. To continuing the conversation together!

For more information, please feel free to contact Tara at tebamford@gmail.com or 802-785-9858.

Strafford Universalist Society

January 3rd, 2018

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

Convened: 6:35 pm

Secretary's Report: accepted as circulated

Treasurer's Report: auditor's report --- all accounts balanced, and we are amazed by Suzanna's ability, skill, and years of dedication.

Minister's Report:

Highlights: Lively Solstice Celebration at Lee's home; connecting with less "active" members and tying to work of visioning and future; scheduling 3rd Sundays - Marissa to lead service on Feb. 18.

Old Business:

- Wayside Pulpit
 - Telos made handmade sign - Let There Be Peace on Earth for the holidays; she's reaching out to Springfield UU's to see if we might borrow their Principles signs to display.
 - John will get new plexi-glass tomorrow and do the replacement of glass

- Daring Democracy book discussion:
 - Andrew ordered books to be given out/borrowed before discussion
 - Decided on one night - Tues. Jan. 30th for discussion at the Strafford Library
 - Depending on how much interest, we might hold one night events in other communities - Sharon, Vershire...
 - The book could lead to other discussions and promote further conversations with town citizens about social action ideas.
 - Marissa and Telos to organize outreach - pr, poster, facebook posts, announcement to UU's and other communities
- Building updates:
 - Summary of urgency of projects:
 1. Shed (sill and boards) – John and Dick to get estimate (after July 1 for payment)
 2. Painting back of building
 3. Window on right up front in sanctuary–firm estimate \$6,300 (winter/spring 18/19)
 4. Shutters –John will reach out to Home Partners to find a price
 - Host a broader UU event in Strafford to raise support (use the town house and church?)
 - Apply to Byrne Foundation for a grant?
- Guest Musician: Emerson Gayle has offered to play piano this coming Sunday.

New Business:

- Professional expense request: Suzanna moved that we pay Telos \$250 stipend for her professional expenses for the year in 2017/2018 budget. Moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Adjourned 8:21 pm

Our Next Board Meeting will be **Wed. February 7th at 6:30pm**, Dick Holbrook's home, 39 Justin Morrill Hwy. Ask us for details and join us if you can. We welcome everyone's ideas and involvement!

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Holy Days, Days to Remember

Wed. Feb. 14 - Ash Wednesday (Christian)

Wed. Feb. 14 - Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)

Wed. Feb. 14 - Valentine's Day

Wed. Feb. 15 - Lupercalia Fertility Festival (Pagan)

Monday, Feb. 19 - Beginning of Lent (Orthodox Christian)

Monday, Feb. 19 - President's Day

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Book Discussion on *Daring Democracy* - Tues. Jan. 30th at 6:30pm at Morrill & Harris Strafford Library Future discussion being planned to be held at the Vershire Library in March

UU Congregations around the country are reading and discussing this important book together. This book is part of the 2017-18 UUA Common Read program. *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. 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.* [Our support for the UU Service Committee helps in this effort! Every action counts...]