



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

January 2018 Newsletter

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

WORSHIP SERVICES held at Barrett Hall

Sunday, January 7th, 10am. “Epiphany For Everyone” Led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.

Welcoming a search, and finding ourselves in a new place guided by an unexpected vision, these are themes in this time of epiphany. As we look to this new year together, we reflect on our history and what it can mean to live into our values. In the cold, finding warmth in social action, compassion; and letting our vision lead us to unexpected places.

Sunday, January 21st, 10am. *Crafting Our Vision Discussion* Led by Tara Bamford.

Please join us as we continue our reflection and discussion of our updated vision and mission, a process the congregation began five years ago. In this new year, we come together as a congregation of caring individuals to craft a common vision. We will have a **Potluck Brunch** together, and welcome your participation in this important process!

Supporting the U.U.S.C. - We will be collecting our *Guest At Your Table* boxes and contributions on Jan. 21st for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, committed to social justice causes in this country and around the world. A 2017 story of hope highlighted the work of *Ursula Rakova*, helping her fellow islanders on the Carteret Islands of Papua New Guinea maintain dignity and keep their culture alive, in the face of re-location due to climate change. 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.

Message from our Minister

We rest on the threshold of a new year once again. When it is so cold outdoors, it can bring our surroundings and life into clearer focus. In order to literally survive in these winter months, we need to have enough wood, oil, or propane to keep our houses warm. Our cars need to be reliable and run along the back roads. I often hope I’ll be home before it gets dark, but it comes early these days that lights need to come on when I return. I rely on the radio tuned to public radio to keep me informed and inspired. The stories can be broad, involving people across the world or intimate, a story of someone that could be you or me. Heading into a new year can offer opportunities - are there any parts of my life, routine I would like to change? Are there people I’ve lost track of that I might reach out to with a card or a call. What small effort or idea can I offer that might help someone else? There is plenty to be alert to and concerned about, and somehow these very cold temperatures, this historic “arctic blast” can eclipse warmth and bring up real concerns about survival for our most vulnerable neighbors, even ourselves. How do we foster inner warmth and connection that can help us ride out this current winter climate? Is there an element of *epiphany* for each of us - ancient story of a star guiding wise men to a child of humble birth that would herald a new era with more compassion for those left outside society? What is our vision and what is our work? In this new year, Tara will help us reflect and continue to craft our vision and mission for the congregation, a process that can be challenging and inspiring, and involves each of us.

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

We are a caring community with our own ideas and experiences, dedicated to living our principles in our daily lives and work, and that is no small task! And as part of a community, we are engaged in this process and deciding our way forward, together. Given who we are as individuals with our varied backgrounds and ideas, it will take a commitment to keep our eyes on a new way forward while remembering our past histories. Each time we come to new year, it offers an opportunity to reflect on past experiences and to look ahead. Joyce Rupp's poem is inspiring to me for it reflects her faith that we aren't alone in this journey of living and she sets a beautiful albeit challenging vision for herself. She balances the qualities she wants her life to contain and has embraced every aspect, while freely admitting in her words that this human living encompasses a daily commitment. I also remember social justice efforts on behalf of African-Americans as we honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work and vision each January. And the work isn't over - our voices, our commitment, our ideas and vision are vital in order to keep our communities of faith strong and enable us to help those who might need to be warmed from the outside in by a kind word, an acknowledgement and support we can lend. So may we bundle ourselves up with hot tea, good books, dear friends and other warming elements in this cold winter season. Let us craft our vision and let it guide our living in this new year together.

Blessings, Rev. Telos

The New Year by Joyce Rupp

Faithful Companion,
in this new year I pray:
to live deeply, with purpose,
to live freely, with detachment,
to live wisely, with humility,
to live justly, with compassion,
to live lovingly, with fidelity,
to live mindfully, with awareness,
to live gratefully, with generosity,
to live fully, with enthusiasm.

Help me to hold this vision
and to daily renew it in my heart,
becoming ever more one with you,
my truest Self.

[p. 160, *Out of the Ordinary*, Joyce Rupp, ave maria press, Notre Dame, Ind., 2000.]

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 **Sunday, January 21**. For more information, please feel free to contact Tara Bamford at tebamford@gmail.com or 802-785-9858.

Strafford Universalist Society

December 5th, 2017

Members Present: Dick J., Suzanna, Marissa (my phone for communications discussion), Tara, John F., Telos, and Andrew

Convened: 6:35 pm

Communications Discussion:

- Possible tools for congregation to share info on other events, meetings, articles, and more
 - Discussion of how to use a network for communication (google group, private list serve, etc.)
 - We can do this through our website and/or through a closed Facebook group
 - Positive response to Telos' long form entry on list serves
- Contact List Discussion: Compared and updated member/friend lists; Tara to create spreadsheet
 - Create Policy around social media, website, facebook - discussed role of digital communications

General meeting events:

Secretary Report: Minutes accepted as circulated

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

- Thoughts to share:
 - Wayside Pulpit - Discussed putting UU Principles into wayside pulpit, highlight one each month
 - Reflected on Thanksgiving Service and possible future activities with three congregations
 - Solstice Celebration to be held at Lee Funston's home again this year. Community invited...

Treasurer's Report: Suzanna shared results for three months ending Sept. 30th

Old Business:

- Daring Democracy book discussion -
 - Timing for discussions - Tuesdays, Jan. 30th, Feb. 6th and Feb. 13th, 6:30pm at Strafford library
 - Hold 3rd Sunday discussion/service as a follow-up.
 - Andrew ordered copies to be available for people to borrow.
- Handicap Ramp - Costs were under budget. Tabled discussion of plantings/memorial garden until Spring
- Pledges for the 2017-2018 year - put cards in Barrett Hall so available

New Business:

Building Discussion:

- We discussed cost of repairing small stained glass window; painting and repair for back of carriage shed - John and Dick to get estimates.
- Decide priority of urgency for building projects and budget; stay connected to the contractors who work with us. Need to get clear on estimates. John and Dick will find out estimates for all three of these projects.

Adjourned 8:55 pm

Our Next Board Meeting will be on **Wed. January 3rd at 6:30pm**, location to be announced.
Ask us for details and join us if you can. We welcome everyone's ideas and involvement!

**Book Discussion on Daring Democracy - Evenings at 6:30pm at Morrill and Harris Strafford Library
dates in Jan. and Feb. to be announced**

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. 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...We will decide on a discussion series and 3rd Sunday offering together!*

* * * * *

Holy Days, Days to Remember
Monday, January 1st - New Year's Day
Saturday, January 5th - Epiphany (Christian)
Sunday, January 14th - Makar Sankranti (Hindu)
Monday, January 15th - Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
Wednesday, January 31st - Tu B'Shevat (Jewish)

* * *