



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

July 2019 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.

Contact Information

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Rev. Telos Whitfield
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2018-2019 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, July 7th, 10am, *Strengthening Our Interdependence* led by Rev. Telos Whitfield. As a faith community, we affirm our interconnection to each other and all of life. We'll look at philosophies and pathways to move from independence to interdependence, together.

Sunday, July 21st, 10am - *Healing Our Planet - What We Can Do!* We will reflect on Climate Church, Climate World by Jim Antal, and conversations being held in our community. Every small action and change in perspective can help; every time we come together strengthens and supports a universal vision.

Message from our Minister

"We are part of a web of life that makes us one with all humanity, one with all the universe. We are grateful for the miracle of consciousness that we share, the consciousness that gives us the power to remember, to love, to care."

words of Frederick E. Gillis

Do you find it difficult to imagine this web of life in literal terms? I do. How can we be one with all humanity, with all the universe? How is this possible? For me, it has helped to picture a vast tapestry where we are each an individual thread, wound together where colors, perspectives, talents mix and mingle. There are worn and thin places that are held together by stronger and dynamic parts to create a whole, unique and beautiful cloth. Or I imagine a great sea with life of all manner of species and sizes living within that huge expanse of water. The largest creatures, whales feed on the smallest creatures. And so, we continue our exploration into what it can mean to not only recognize that we are interdependent and connected, but to act and practice within that reality. This is work of a lifetime! And now is the time, perhaps more than ever before. Climate change and the warming of the planet is now being considered as *the* greatest issue and crisis of our time. It goes way beyond borders and countries. It reaches and touches every human being, every creature it ways that we are only beginning to witness and react to. From extreme flooding and fires, to the loss of species. Some animals, birds, insects will and are adapting but not all of them will be able to. People are planning for "managed retreat"; moving away and relocating to higher ground, rebuilding as the water rises. But these are strategies and actions, not a universal vision that we can all lend our energy and faith toward. Accepting and embracing our interdependence will fuel a vision and collection of ideas and strength that can bring people together, from all communities. There has never been a universal crisis of this magnitude where the awareness of how we are connected with each other is more needed, and can lead our actions and bring us together. How do we deepen into "*gratitude for the miracle of consciousness*" that Frederick Gillis offers?

We may have to ask ourselves what is at the core of our fear of difference? Why do certain people, creatures, places even, inspire fear; make us tired or drain our energy just to think of them? It can feel safer to imagine that we are separate or removed from a crisis. That we are somehow protected because we live in Vermont but everyone one of us is involved. We have all contributed in some way to the current state of the climate environment and likewise, we can all contribute and help to turn the tide. It can be hard to believe that our small, individual actions do make a difference but it is because we are joining with thousands, millions of others to grow and support and act upon a vision. Perhaps this is the purpose of our existence as human beings with the ability to reason and choose and act. We are responsible. By placing our understanding of interdependence and our commitment to each other, all of us, at the center of our altar, we help to grow the collective strength and vision. In Climate Church, Climate World, Jim Antal offers that *“since people of faith and conscience can’t possibly outspend the fossil fuel industry, we must seek a more hopeful future using a different kind of currency. Altogether, passion, prayer, persistence, our bodies, our love of creation, and our concern for eternity can offer a worthy witness to the myopic trajectory of market capitalism which operates with a time horizon measured in weeks and months rather than centuries and eons.”* (pg. 74) We are those people of faith and conscience that can offer our passion and persistence, our love of creation through our voices and energy to help live into a new vision of healing and wholeness, of true interdependence.

with care, Rev. Telos

Holy Days, Days to Remember

July 4th - Independence Day

*July 13 - 15th - Obon (Ulambana) ** - Buddhist/ Shinto*

*July 16th - Asalha Puja Day** - Buddhist*

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

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We held our ***Annual Meeting*** on Sunday, June 7th and John Freitag was our moderator! We reflected on the year’s events and work, from worship services led by a variety of community members, church members and Rev. Telos, to our commitment to the U.U.Service Committee and it’s social justice work, to continued work on our stained glass windows and church building. We are a small congregation but there is strength, creativity and care within our circle! The draft minutes from our meeting will be included in a future newsletter.

As always, if you have questions or ideas, and wonder about ways you can be involved in the work and life of our congregation, 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.

You can also speak with our minister, Rev. Telos Whitfield about your gifts and perspectives.

Thank you for being part of this community!

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Join Us for Discussion and Action on Climate Change - A Community Effort!

The United Church of Strafford and the Universalist Society of Strafford are excited to partner together to launch a town-wide book study of Climate Church, Climate World, by our neighbor and national climate activist Jim Antal. Climate Church, Climate World is a road map to help spiritual communities speed the needed cultural change and reorientation of society to avert the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

"This book will inspire both the courage and conviction people of faith need to provide the leadership necessary to realize God's dream of a just world in which humanity is reconciled to all creation." Archbishop Desmond Tutu

When: 5 Sundays in a row, from June 16 to July 14, from 11:45 am – 1 pm, plus a special sixth session with the author, Jim Antal, to be scheduled by the group. ****There are three more discussions and everyone is welcome to join us for these important conversations!**

Where: The parish hall in the back right of the United Church of Strafford, in the upper village.

How to participate:

- Email unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com to help us keep track of numbers and so we can add you to the book group mailing list
- Get the book! Copies are available at the Norwich Bookstore and on Amazon or your favorite bookseller. A limited number of copies are available on loan for anyone unable to purchase a copy. Email unitedchurchofstrafford@gmail.com
- Start reading! As you read, please record ideas or examples from the text that strike you as the most important, and bring your notes for use in our weekly discussions.
- For the first session (June 16th) please read the Introduction and Chapter 1, and bring a notebook or journal and something to write with.

Feeling superior to the rest of nature, humankind has nearly destroyed it.

Feeling small and inferior to the vast and awesome wonder of the universe, we could easily resign ourselves to our worst faults. In either case, we are not able to live up to our potential as a powerful part of one harmonious life force. A new attitude of equality, cooperation, and mutuality between ourselves and all others can change our own lives and the whole world. We can begin to see our true role as unique and important beings in a vast interconnected system of many unique and important beings.

from Green Spirituality - Reflections on Belonging to a World Beyond Myself by Veronica Ray