



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

March 2020 Newsletter

"We seek not rest but transformation. We are dancing through each other as doorways." Marge Piercy

**ALL ARE
WELCOME!**

Services
1st and 3rd Sundays
10 am service

**WE GATHER IN
BARRETT HALL
for the FALL and
WINTER**

**Coffee &
Conversation
following services**

Summer at the USS
Church at 2 Justin
Morrill Highway at
Vt. Rte. 132 in
South Strafford

Winter at Barrett Hall

Contact Information

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**2019-2020
Church Officers**

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

WORSHIP SERVICES AT BARRETT HALL

Sunday, March 1st at 10am - *Honoring The Earth Charter and Climate Justice* led by Rev. Telos Whitfield. It was Sept. 9, 2001 when we held an Earth Charter Celebration in Vermont. We walked the ark with our prayers for the earth down to the United Nations beginning on Sept. 11th... We will explore the years since that time, and the justice work being done to honor our earth.

Sunday, March 15th at 10am - *Stories and Learning from Holocaust Survivors* led by Phil Kinsler.

Message from our Minister

You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments that stand out, the moments when you have really lived, are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love. - Henry Drummond

I remember our festive and colorful Mardi Gras Celebration that we offered to the Strafford community a few years ago, with gratitude and fondness. We handed out many strands of beads, ate Kings Cake together, danced to lively music, took photos in the giant mask and celebrated together, older and young ones all together. It was a grand event! A lot of work, yes, but it is a wonderful memory of an event we hosted. This is the time just before Lent, when celebrations are held and people eat and dance with abandon, leading to a time of reflection, anticipating new life and inspiration. This will be my last winter and spring serving this dear congregation, as I move on to a new path, and this community steps into transition and a new pathway forward too. It is a bittersweet time of gratitude and sadness. I hold so many memories, both joyful and sad, inspiring and challenging of these past six years together. So many meetings and discussions, so many ideas exchanged and disagreements settled. We have always found a way forward. We built a handicapped ramp, beautiful and strong to allow everyone to enter our church doors; and the ramp allowed family members to attend the memorial services of their loved ones. We have worshiped together over these past six years, honoring the seasons and the liturgical calendar, exploring topics far-ranging and close to my heart. We jumped into the climate justice movement, co-hosting the book discussion, services and ultimately our climate justice conference where 180 people came together to share ideas and gain strength and courage from each other to face this global challenge. You have each offered me lessons in ministry and have changed my life. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve this community of open hearts and seeking minds. Let us embrace these next and final months together with an openness, as we enter into this time of transition together. With gratitude, Rev. Telos

Holy Days, Days to Remember - March

March 2 - 20 - Nineteen Day Fast - Baha'i*

*March 3 - Hindi New Year** - Hindu*

March 4 - Ash Wednesday - Christian

March 8 - First Sunday of Lent - Christian

March 9 - Magha Puja Day - Buddhist*

*March 10 - Holi** - Hindu*

March 10 - Purim - Jewish*

March 10 - Hola Mohalla - Sikh

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day - Christian

March 20 - Spring Equinox - Ostara - Mabon - Wicca/ Pagan*

March 21 - Norooz (New Year) - Persian/ Zoroastrian

March 21 - Naw-Ruz (New Year) - Baha'i

*March 25 - April 2 - Ramayana** - Hindu*

*March 28 - Khordad Sal (Birth of Prophet Zarathushtra)** - Zoroastrian*

*holiday begins the evening before.

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

Strafford UU Society

Monthly Business Meeting

February 8, 2020

Members Present: Andrew L., John F., Suzanna L., Katy, B., Telos W. (minister), Lee F., Gayle G., Marissa M.,
Meeting convened: 6:50 pm, John Presiding

1. Opening words, Telos leading

2. Secretary's Report

- a. Approved as circulated

3. Treasurer's Report

- a. Updated pledge summary
 - i. No major changes; 18 pledge units available, 9 pledges, 2 regular givers
 - ii. No Action required

4. Minister's Report

- a. Telos offered her letter of resignation to the board and trustees as of the end of June.
 - i. Six years of tremendous work.
 - ii. The board is incredibly grateful for her wonderful service to the congregation.
 - iii. She is sending out the letter tomorrow to church members and friends.
- b. Review of worship services -
 - i. Marissa led 1st Sunday in February; Telos for 3rd Sunday
 - ii. 3rd Sunday in March: Phil Kinsler, guest speaker
 - iii. April: Easter Sunrise service; 3rd Sunday: Tara on our mission vision

iv. Marissa has potential speakers and will work with Telos on future 3rd Sundays

c. Review of social action

- i. Follow up meeting to climate conference this Sunday at Norwich church
- ii. Looking at Vermont Climate network of UU churches
- iii. Motion: to contribute an additional \$75 towards expenses from Jan. Climate conference. Approved unanimously.

c. Review of pastoral care

5. Old Business

a. Regional Meetings coming up

- i. Northern New England UU District meeting - Fri. April 24th- Sat. April 25th, Nashua, NH.
- ii. VT/Quebec convention is on Sat. May 16th, in Middlebury VT.
- iii. UUA General Assembly is in June in Providence, RI.
 1. Delegate process for voting.
 2. Action Step: Suzanna will research past to see if we can support registration fees for folks who want to go. We want to support our congregants going and participating in these sorts of events.

b. Decision and conversation around budget/ minister

- i. Conversation changes some with Telos' resignation
- ii. John: take this time to reflect on what we want, do some congregational introspection, be creative in the next year, and then pursue an action.
- iv. Use 3rd Sunday April service around mission and vision - call all members and friends to come, share and think about future.
- v. Regional or district resources could be really helpful; connecting with other small congregations;
- vi. Ideas about next steps, models and ways to move forward discussed.

6. New Business

a. Expanding interaction with other area UU's and United Church of Strafford

- i. Andrew expressed thoughts about how we might be able to dovetail our services with moments when upper village church is offering a somewhat ecumenical service (MLK Day).

Adjourned 8:30 pm

"I used to think that the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems, but I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that."

Our next Business Meeting will be on **Wednesday, March 4th at 6:30pm** at Lee Funston's home at 192 Justin Morrill Hwy in Strafford. Everyone is welcome to attend to share ideas and join the conversation around the present and future of our congregation.

It has often been said that the only constant is change. With the leaving at the end of the year of our beloved minister Telos Whitfield, the Universalist Society of Strafford will once more in its long (over 220 year) history will be faced with challenge and change.

It has also been often said that when one door closes another opens. We will be exploring the opportunities open to us at our monthly business meeting to which all are welcome on Wednesday March 4 and Wednesday April 1 at 6:30 pm at the home of Lee Funston, 192 Justin Morrill Highway. Where we go now will also be the topic of our third Sunday gathering, April 19th at Barrett Hall. At that time, Tara Bamford, who led us in our envisioning process in 2018 will once again help us sort through our desires and options.

The mission statement and goals we came together upon then are included in the newsletter. They can serve as common ground upon which we can go forward. In the meantime , all are encouraged to think, talk and listen with others, and imagine what you would like for our congregation. No thought is too outrageous. Let us be as bold and courageous in our time as those who founded this church based on the radical notions of love and inclusiveness were so long ago!

John Freitag, moderator

Universalist Society of Strafford
Strategic Plan
Adopted June 3, 2018

I. Who We Are

A. Our Role in the Larger Unitarian Universalist Community

We are a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and actively seek opportunities to affirm and promote the seven UUA principles:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the independent web of all existence, of which we are a part

We participate in the Northern New England District and Vermont-Quebec Universalist Convention.

B. Our Congregation

We are a group of independent thinkers connected by shared values.

We are committed to living and promoting the seven UUA principles.

We stand up for social justice.

We are a caring, accepting community. We support and inspire each other through life's struggles and challenges, and celebrate the achievements and successes of members, visitors, families and friends.

Our gatherings provide a safe space to learn, explore, reflect, share ideas, grow, recharge and gain strength, comfort, and inspiration.

We invite everyone to participate in any way they are able and feel comfortable, from attending our gatherings, to music or presenting programs, leading discussions, sharing food at coffee hour, or helping with outreach.

Leadership has the opportunity to grow here. We nurture shared leadership. Contributions from those willing and able are appreciated, but not required.

We enjoy sharing music, singing, chalice lighting, joys and concerns and coffee hour.

We honor the deep roots of our history as the 2nd oldest Universalist congregation in Vermont and 4th oldest in the U.S.

We appreciate what has been created in the past and steward our 1833 church building as a symbol of the ideals which we still share.

We value equally the lessons of our elders and the perspectives of our youth.

We hold in high regard and strive to carefully use each dollar and each moment donated to support the work of the congregation.

II. Where We Want To Go

A. In January 2023, the Universalist Society of Strafford will have continued to grow as:

A growing, vibrant congregation that is open and welcoming to all people, feels emotionally safe, encourages participation, and is connected to the wider Unitarian Universalist Association, our communities, and the world.

A congregation that advocates for the climate and environment, social justice, and peace.

A church which provides a place for music, comfort, insight, inspiration, and spiritual renewal.

A caring community that is looking out for each other, strengthening our ties.

B. Some of the ways we'll achieve this:

Build community by helping each other within our congregation and by providing service to others and addressing the needs of our world.

Recognize that caring, nurturing and support includes both the spiritual and the practical, and that increasing our connectedness outside of Sunday services is needed to really grow in this area.

Continue to hold minister-led 1st Sunday services, and 3rd Sunday programs and discussions that provide an opportunity for members to learn from each other and to benefit from each others' connections outside the congregation.

Make a concerted effort to bring in new ideas and welcome diverse thought.

Communicate effectively within the congregation, and with the Strafford community and surrounding towns.

Increase visibility in the community and in social media.

Use programs and events as outreach and education.

Be deliberate about making visitors feel welcome and comfortable.

Continue to increase our attention to universal accessibility.

Increase and judiciously invest our resources to ensure sustainability in moving forward.

Support members' related activities consistent with our principles and limited resources.

Continue to steward our church building to honor its heritage as a symbol of our shared values.