



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

March 2018 Newsletter

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

Winter Worship Services held at Barrett Hall

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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2016-2017 Church Officers

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

Sunday, March 4, 10am *Ecology and Power of Small Communities*
led by Rev. Telos Whitfield. Inspiring stories of people preserving lands, crossing
barriers and coming together to make change. It is the power of small communities
to lead the way!

Sunday, March 18, 10am

The Challenge of Charting Your Own Path led by John Freitag.

Unitarian Universalists while having seven agreed upon principles including
"the inherent worth and dignity of every person", we do not have a creed. Individuals
have the opportunity and responsibility of searching for truth and meaning in their
own lives. We will discuss what has worked and can perhaps be a help as we each
make our way in often difficult times.

Sunday, April 1st

Easter Sunrise Service, around 6:15am (depending on time of sunrise) at Gove Hill led
with the United Church of Strafford.

Pancake Community Breakfast at the United Church of Strafford.

The World Goes On worship service, 10am at Barrett Hall.

Message from our Minister

*"By allowing ourselves to become discouraged, we lose our courage. Our only hope
is to find the courage to climb. Our only hope to build a new future is, to paraphrase
William Dietrich, to re-image the planet to be the very best world it can be for its
inhabitants. And ourselves to be the very best we can be on it."
[p. 14, The Ecology of Hope, Ted Bernard and Jora Young.]*

I discovered yet another inspiring book on the shelves of my local recycling center -
The Ecology of Hope. Below the title it reads: "Communities Collaborate for
Sustainability" and is filled with real stories of seemingly insurmountable problems
being quietly and courageously solved by people coming together in communities around
the country. From the Eastern shore of Virginia to Mohegan Island in Maine, "*Listening
to the Forest*" on an Indian reservation in Wisconsin to preserving a breeding river for
salmon in California, these collaborations took courage and humility among differing
groups coming together to find solutions in their own communities. Often, we imagine
that we need to wait for the state or federal government to take action, our legislators to
take a stand, even businesses and corporations to wake up, to change, to realize what
needs to happen. But the local leaders and people in these small communities realized
that they needed to make decisions and find a path forward now, because to wait might
mean the land and ecology and very survival of their communities was in jeopardy. The
process wasn't easy and the path forward definitely had its struggles but the people were
committed to the places they called home and to overcoming differences that separated
them. They decided they needed to have the difficult conversations, listen and learn from
each other, to find solutions now.

Finding the courage to take action may begin with the words of William Dietrich: *“to re-image the planet to be the very best world in can be for its inhabitants,”* human, animal, fish, plant, every living thing. It may seem that a crisis of some kind has to occur before this courage, this impetus to act can be found. The knowledge that a species or wilderness may disappear can be enough and then it requires us to come together to listen, to cross boundaries, to have our perceptions expanded. Is it possible for groups of people to make change from the ground up? It’s not only possible, it is the way of the world. Daniel Botkin writes that *“Life and the environment are one thing, not two, and people, as all life, are immersed in the one system. When we influence nature, we influence ourselves; when we change nature, we change ourselves.”* This ancient belief is a thread throughout religions and now embraced by scientists, artists, teachers and philosophers. It is embodied in our own dear principle of interdependence, and celebrated in communities large and small. If we embrace this idea of one interrelated system, it can not only inspire and strengthen us to make changes and support each other in moments of ecological and social struggle, it may help to heal and replenish the earth and our own souls. Blessings, Rev. Telos

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Holy Days, Days to Remember
Tuesday, March 20th - Vernal / Spring Equinox
Sunday, March 25th - Palm Sunday (Christian)
Friday, March 30th - Good Friday (Christian)
Saturday March 31st - Passover (Jewish) - begins at sundown the day before
Sunday, April 1st - Easter

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Daring Democracy Book Discussion - Sunday, March 15th at 7pm, Vershire Library hosted by Marissa Mazzucco

Contact Marissa at creativemiamuse@gmail.com for more details or to borrow a copy of the book!

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. We held a discussion in Strafford in January and will now hold a second one in Vershire. *Here 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...]

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We did not hold a February business meeting due to winter weather.

Our Next Business Meeting will be held on **Wed. March 7th at 6:30pm, location to be decided.** Ask us for details and join us if you can. Please feel free to contact any of our board members - John Freitag, Marissa Mazzucco, Suzanna Liepmann, Andrew Lane, Dick Josler, or Rev. Telos with questions, ideas or concerns. We welcome everyone’s ideas and involvement in the work of the church!

In January, the students and administration of Montpelier High School made the decision to raise a *Black Lives Matter* flag to honor and celebrate their community, and since that time, they have been the target of hate mail and toxic social media along with an outpouring of support. This action has drawn national attention and has displayed the courage and strength of that school community.

Our letter is one of hundreds they have received...



Universalist Society of Strafford
Strafford, Vermont

Feb. 11, 2018

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff of Montpelier High School,

We want to extend our support for your decision to fly a *Black Lives Matter* flag. It takes courage and wisdom to come together as a community to take this stand. We are aware that you have received negative and hurtful responses and we are saddened. It is an important time when we need to pull together as communities of all ages and backgrounds to advocate for justice and human rights, creating welcoming environments where everyone can learn and thrive. Please know that your school is leading in this work for our state and the country. You have our support from the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Strafford, Vermont. Thank you for your good work!

In Solidarity and Love,

Rev. Telos Whitfield and the congregation of the Universalist Society of Strafford