



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

May 2019 Newsletter

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

Worship Services

Sunday, May 5th, 10am - *Remembering the Earth* led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.

There are those moments when we can see, hear, and touch the earth, from birds calling to each other to rivers rushing along, to soft green moss and new leaves. How can we remember this feeling of awe and peace, and allow it to inspire us to do what we can to protect and care for our environment?

Sunday, May 19th, 10am - *A Poetry Potluck* led by Tara Bamford.

Please join us for this conversation - a sharing of words and what they mean to us. Instead of a dish to share, bring your favorite poem or passage to share. These may be words that have given you inspiration, comfort, strength, joy, anything goes. We'll talk about the readings and what we each hear in them.

Message from our Minister

"But we have only begun to love the earth. We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life. How could we tire of hope? - so much is in bud. How can we desire fail? - we have only begun to imagine justice and mercy,...."

words of Denise Levertov

It is Spring, finally and there is green to prove it. There are green grasses coming up, animals digging and burrowing in the earth, birds returning; the earth is waking up again. And these are welcome signs after what has felt like a long wintertime. It is heartening and reassuring, I feel, a reminder that the cycles of nature can be an inspiration and a comfort. And so, many of us are raking those long forgotten leaves away, readying garden beds and cleaning out outdoor spaces. It feels good to care for our own small patch of land, even if they are indoor pots that line our window sills or fresh cut daffodils with their sunny yellow color bringing a smile. The larger concerns, questions and issues of land use, environmental problems, pollution and run-off can seem so overwhelming, it feels easier for me to just focus on my back yard. And it's true, each time we decide in favor of what is better for the earth, we are contributing to its rejuvenating potential and health. After all, we are intimately connected to the land we live upon, and all its inhabitants. Elizabeth Roberts offers that *"Together with the sea, air, sunlight, and other life forms, we take part in a planet-sized living system."* Veronica Ray, author of Green Spirituality - Reflections on Belonging to a World Beyond Myself, reflected on these words and the role that we can play as human beings. "As conscious - and self-conscious - beings on this planet, we are in a unique position to affect it. We have harnessed electricity, using it for light, heat, and other purposes. We have found natural substances for healing. We are beginning to understand nature's ability to heal our distressed minds with aromas, sounds and visual beauty. We can cause great damage to natural systems, but we can stop the harm, and often, reverse it. We can walk lightly on the earth, deliberately becoming a positive link in the life chain, contributing our awareness and action to improve life for all species." But this is a choice we make, and a consciousness we cultivate; even a spirituality we have developed.

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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2018-2019 Church Officers

Moderator - John Freitag
Assistant Moderator -
Marissa Mazzucco
Treasurer -
Suzanna Liepmann
Secretary - open
Trustees - Katie Botsford
Andrew Lane and
Lee Funston

Green spirituality sounds much like what many of us are describing when we share emotions and feelings of awe, hope, curiosity at seeing young plants, animals, birds, the colors of clouds or the sound of wind. Often what we see or hear is unexpected, and catches us by surprise. It is the beauty and complexity that exists just beyond our doorstep. But it means taking the time to listen, to watch, to learn. "Besides carefully avoiding damaging the earth by the products we use and the things we eat and do, we can contribute to the natural wildness of the planet in our own small ways...we can leave parts of the earth untouched." (Veronica Ray) We can choose to walk lightly, deepening our connection with each careful step. with love, Rev. Telos

Holy Days, Days to Remember

May 1st - Beltane - Samhain - Wiccan/Pagan

May 2nd - National Day of Prayer USA - Interfaith

May 2nd - Yom HaShoah - Jewish

May 6th - Ramadan begins - Islam*

May 9th - Yom Ha'Atzmaut - Jewish*

*May 18th - Visakha Puja - Buddha Day** - Buddhist*

May 23rd - Declaration of the Bab - Baha'l*

May 23rd - Lag B'Omer - Jewish*

May 29th - Ascension of Baha'u'llah - Baha'l*

May 30 - Ascension of Jesus - Christian

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April Business Meeting

Universalist Society of Strafford

Board Meeting April 17, 2019

The meeting was graciously hosted by Lee Funston. In attendance were Telos, Marissa, Katie, Suzanna, Lee and John. Tara participated by phone.

Ministers Report - Telos gave a report on what she has been doing - Easter sunrise service held with United Church and our worship on Easter morning; 3rd Sunday in May led by Tara B.; supporting members going through challenging times; attended ministers' meeting and training.

Report from NNED District Meeting - Tara B. reported by phone on the District Annual meeting - focus was dissolution of the Northern New England District, and merger with larger UU New England Regional District. Questions raised as to process and how NNED endowment funds would be handled should this merger take place. Chalice Lighters program to be eliminated. Tara and Suzanna to continue discussion with other congregations at the Vermont Quebec Universalist Convention meeting in May.

Building Report - John discovered vent pipe broken inside attic and will attempt a repair. Two front stain glass windows are now out and being repaired; due to be back in by end of May.

Financial Sustainability - Board discussed ongoing issue of financial sustainability. The need at a minimum for increasing amount raised to support the minister by 50% or another \$3,000 continues to be the goal for the next fiscal year. Discussion with church members planned for Annual Meeting. Board members to share importance of congregation as an invitation for others to give. Will discuss further at May board meeting.

Annual Meeting - Meeting Warning will be in May newsletter.

A slate of officers were proposed as follows:

John F. – Moderator

Marissa M. – Assistant Moderator

Suzanna L. – Treasurer

Secretary – **Open**

Andrew L. – Trustee - pending

[To check with Andrew to see if willing to offer another term.]

Community Book Discussion - Telos will follow-up on discussion of the book “Climate Change, Climate Church” with Rev. Tom Kinder from the United Church.

Next Business Meeting is on Wednesday, May 1.

Respectfully submitted, John Freitag

Our next meeting will be on **Wed. May 1st at 6:30pm**, most likely to be held at Lee Funston’s home in Strafford to continue our conversation. For any questions or more details, please contact our Board Members - John Freitag, moderator, Marissa Mazzucco, Suzanna Liepmann or a Trustee - Andrew Lane, Katy Botsford or Lee Funston, or Rev. Telos.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to be involved in the work and business of our congregation and anyone is Welcome to join the board or attend a meeting if they want to get involved! All board meetings are open and a great opportunity to get to know each other over a cup of tea or coffee.

We’re working together to keep our church community alive as well as the building sound.

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Looking Ahead: We will hold our **Annual Meeting and Potluck on Sunday, June 2nd** at 11:30am following our service. We will reflect on the past year, vote on any measures or decisions looking ahead, and share ideas and vision for our community. Everyone is welcome!

There are **open positions** available and we would welcome your involvement.

Secretary - attend monthly board meetings, take and distribute notes; assist in putting annual report together; send out church announcements.

Trustee - attend monthly board meetings; attend yearly trustee meeting to review endowment funds

****Please feel free to contact anyone on the board for more information, and thanks!**

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What a joy it is
to feel the soft, springy earth under my feet
once more,
to follow grassy roads that lead to ferny brooks
where I can bathe my fingers in a cataract of rippling
notes,
or to clamber over a stone wall into green fields that
tumble and roll and climb in riotous gladness!

Helen Keller

Friends,

I am writing this in my capacity as a Trustee of our historic Church, as a long-term committed member of UUSS, and a lifelong UU. Our Annual meeting is coming up in June, and we will be entering a new fiscal year. It's time to renew your commitment to keeping our UU community viable. We very much value your support and involvement!!

We on the board are concerned that, at the current rate of giving, we are not able to keep up with our financial commitments in a sustainable manner. These include essential maintenance, repairs and upgrades to our historic building, a bare bones budget for such things as utilities, rental of Barrett Hall, insurance, PO Box rental, etc. We also, in keeping with our mission and UU principles, pay dues to both the regional district and to the larger UUA. Lastly, but very importantly, we are blessed with a part time ministry.

We have also been blessed with an endowment, which is managed by the UUA. As Trustees, we feel rather strongly that spending down this endowment endangers the future viability of our church. We have agreed that we ought only to spend the proceeds but not the principal of this precious resource. It is impossible to know what future generations may want or need. It is quite clear, though, that the careful husbandry of those who preceded us has allowed us to inherit a very special sanctuary, one filled with memories and meaning.

Our services, led and /or coordinated by Rev. Telos Whitfield, give us a time and place to set aside the multitasking harriedness of life, and to be together, in the present. To sing, to reflect, to affirm the still radical ideas of the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, as well as the interconnected web of creation of which we are all a part. We affirm our belief in and commitment to justice, equity and compassion, to democratic principles, and to an ever evolving search for meaning and truth. We support the justice work of the UUA, and the service work of the UUSC. We welcome inspiration from many faiths, as well from our own life experiences.

The work that we do is not trivial. We are a presence in our town, and in our larger community. We have an important legacy. In a diverse world, small ecosystems and small butterfly wings can have effects reaching far beyond what we can immediately see. Twelve committed Friends launched the anti-slavery movement. It might take 100 monkeys to revolutionize a way of doing things, but every monkey is needed to bring about the change. Likewise, the last drop of water might be the tipping point, but every drop is needed.

We need you, the members, to be our leaders. We recognize that we all have many challenges, for our time, for our personal budgets, for our commitments and attentions. We have written grants, we have donated our time, we have held fundraisers. At the same time, we have also had to choose between limiting our programming vs spending beyond our means. After all that we have accomplished in the past 20 years, it would be very sad to have to choose between maintaining our sanctuary or hiring a minister. I would much rather be thinking of new and creative ways to reach new people in new ways, and how to be in solidarity with those that share our hopes and dreams.

We think this year that we need to ask our friends and members to increase their giving by 50%. Perhaps those of us who can, might consider even more, or giving a larger gift to the endowment. We are unanimous as a Board that this is the most realistic and sustainable way for us to move forward. We do not want to eliminate the ministerial position, we do not want to abandon the building, and we want to see UUSS continuing as a viable entity into the foreseeable future.

I do hope to see you at the annual meeting!

Katie Botsford, Trustee