



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

November 2017 Newsletter

"Peace is every step. It turns the endless path to joy." Thich Nhat Hanh

**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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**2016-2017
Church Officers**

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

WORSHIP SERVICES held at Barrett Hall

Sunday, November 5th, 10am. "Finding Common Ground" Led by Rev. Telos Whitfield.
We look to leaders in our UU history for inspiration and guidance, and explore the guiding principles and ways of living that gave them courage and inspiration. Looking to the common ground we share, what do we want to know about each other that will move us to care, and act as agents of change in the world?

Sunday, November 19th, 10am. "The Power of Words" Led by Tara Bamford.
Please join us for this discussion of words and what they mean to us. The first draft of our updated vision statement will be shared and discussed. Following that, there will be a time for anyone who wishes to share poems, book passages, sayings and other words that have give us hope, comfort, strength or other help through our own challenges.

Thursday, November 23rd, 10am. "Our Community Thanksgiving Service" held at Our Lady of Light Chapel. We gather each year with members of the faith community to explore gratitude and offer thanks with words and music. Join Us!

Message from our Minister

*"We need a path to walk if we're returning to freedom.
This journey can be called forgiveness, or divine healing, or any of
a thousand other names in as many religions."*

[words of Ana Holub from [Forgive and Be Free](#)]

My washing machine has been broken for the past few months so I've been going to the local laundromat to do my laundry. I am there with families and single people, older and younger folks, and we are all in that brightly lit room keeping track of our own clothing. Some of us read magazines, talk on our phones or eat dinner but rarely do we talk to each other, beyond a simple hello, with the exception of a man I have seen there twice. He and I struck up a conversation the first time about his working life driving big dump trucks, hauling wood and construction materials on the back roads of Vermont. This time, we talked of hunting and families, how people don't seem to have the time to hunt anymore and how our own family members can be so different from us. He and I have very different political views (evidenced by a short conversation about the current state of the country) but found other areas of life in common, and ended up laughing and encouraging each other. I came home inspired by this chance encounter, reminded once again about what I can learn from someone that I might only end up talking to at the laundromat where what we did have was time. Finding common ground seems to be one of the only alternatives and openings for connection in this era of division, struggle and misunderstanding. What does it mean to be a member of a community, a state, or a country? What does it require of us and are we up for the task? There are courageous people speaking out against injustice, investigating and reporting, writing and sharing information, and I am so grateful for their commitment to this work.

They are helping to heal and transform communities and individuals. And it takes strength and a deep commitment to being a force for good in the world. Without their voices, without ours, people and circumstances, our very earth may continue to be overlooked, forgotten, or misunderstood. But it can be so easy for me to get wrapped up in the details of my own life. My community action work has been difficult and complicated these past few weeks, and has taken much of my energy. So I needed an encounter like I had with the stranger turned friend in the laundromat to wake me up again. The leap from feeling tired, not wanting to make the effort to reach across the distance to make a connection and find common ground ended up being worth it. I came home with energy and the reminder of how much of what I experience is universal. Fatigue, fear, anxiety, joy, kindness - all common human emotions we all experience. How do we approach our own lives in order to find more freedom, more joy and less fear about what might come next? I think it may come from taking those moments to feel grateful for the small things. Taking gentle care of ourselves. What does that even mean? Relishing in that unexpected laugh with someone; making the conscious decision to turn off the news and turn on the music or simply sit in the silence; getting to know what it is that brings us peace of mind and generosity of heart.

It seems that our community is on a threshold. We have a beautiful new accessible ramp gracing the front of our church, a visible symbol of welcome for all to see. But our circle seems to be growing smaller and we miss our long-time members; we long for new people to join us. We need to share the responsibility and opportunity to craft a vision for where we might go from here, together. There needs to be time for unexpected conversations and renewed connection with each other. We have so much in common but it can be easy to take for granted, especially when each of us faces challenges in our individual lives. May we come together in this season of gratitude and embrace who we are and what our community calling might be. We might be surprised and amazed by where we find ourselves and what we are capable of.
with gratitude, Rev. Telos

Holy Days, Days to Remember
Saturday, November 11 - Veteran's Day
Thursday, November 23rd - Thanksgiving Day

Stafford Universalist Society

October 4th, 2017

Members Present: Marissa, John, Telos, and Andrew

Convened: 6:45 pm

Secretary Report: Minutes accepted as read

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

§ Care and contact with members going through transition and illness

§ Worship - Helen and Gregory Wilson - 3rd Sun. in Oct.; Tara B. offering Nov. 19 Service

§ Community Thanksgiving service - Thurs. Nov. 23 at 10am, held at Our Lady of Light Chapel;

Telos to meet with Rev. Tom Kinder and Therese Linehan to plan.
§ Our Solstice Celebration will be the 3rd Sunday in December!

Treasurer's Report: no report this month

Old Business:

§ Finances - Andrew will do audit of books with Suzanna

§ Handicap Ramp - metal railing will be completed soon; Tim and Dick J. are working with John about the gates.

· Memorial Ideas Update:

§ Discussion last month about some kind of Memorial wall, quilt or otherwise for members and community or connected folks. Ideas include quilt, garden in the concrete L, wall outside the church, plaque inside; Katy will look at the outdoor spaces and think about how it might be done

· Climate Conference Report: Little or no financial or paperwork for us to complete

New Business:

· Pledges for the 2017-2018 year - Letter from Suzanna and Pledge Form were included in newsletter

· Closing up the church for the winter - Everything is ready to be buttoned up for the winter; if a nice weekend, Marissa will come and do some flooring touch-up.

· Moving and use of sound system - John will move it to under the stage; Telos to use it more and we'll make sure wireless mic is working.

· Concerns about attendance - some members not attending as often; how to bring in new people...exploring our image and input from members about what they want going forward; little outward sign to the world of our display of our principles and values; exploring different ways - presenting community events? How do we re-energize the community?

§ Action Items: John will write a piece for list serve and Strafford news about where we are and where we may be going. We will reach out to members who haven't been coming on Sundays; invite them back and ask for ideas.

Adjourned 8:00 pm

If you have questions or want to talk about the business, events and work of the congregation, please contact any of our Board members: John Freitag, Moderator, Marissa Mazzucco, Assistant Moderator, Suzanna Liepmann, Treasurer. Trustees: Dick Josler, Andrew Lane, Katy Botsford Minister, Rev. Telos Whitfield