



Universalist Society of Strafford

Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

July 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

Saturday, July 1st - Fourth of July Festival in Strafford. This is one of our Annual Fundraisers. We will be selling MUFFINS, and need your Help with Baking or Selling!

WORSHIP SERVICES held at the Church

Sunday, July 2nd, 10am. "Laughter, Iced Tea, and Interdependence" led by Rev. Telos Whitfield. Can we ever truly be independent? Who picks the leaves that become the tea we drink? What brings a smile and lightens our load? How do our actions impact other people, creatures, and the environment? Sharing the lighter moments, drinking our tea and moving toward interdependence...

Sunday, June 23rd, 10am. "Practicing Practical Wisdom: How we learn to make ethical choices in our everyday lives" This will be a talk and discussion led by Ken Sharpe, a professor at Swarthmore College who is currently teaching a graduate course at Dartmouth this summer on the subject of practical wisdom. He, along with a fellow Swarthmore professor, Barry Schwartz, wrote a book on the subject in which the section on education features Strafford's own outstanding teacher Joey Hawkins. Come and share in this unique opportunity and learn a bit of practical wisdom with Professor Sharpe! ****Please note: This is the 4th Sunday of the month!****

Message from our Minister

"The choice to bless the world is more than an act of will a moving forward into the world with the intention to do good. It is an act of recognition, a confession of surprise, a grateful acknowledgment that in the midst of a broken world unspeakable beauty, grace and mystery abide." [p. 164, Blessing the World What Can Save Us Now,

Rebecca Ann Parker, Robert Hardies, edit., Skinner House Books, Boston, 2006.]

The summer days are upon us with longer days, warm nights and perhaps some expanses of time to contemplate, pursue a creative project or spend time resting by the water. We live in a truly green state, surrounded by grasses and trees, flowers and creatures, where time does seem to slow down. With so much turmoil in the political and global arenas, it seems especially important to relish in the precious weeks of summertime. And we have returned to our beautiful church building where the breezes blow through and the light comes through the brilliant colors of our stained glass windows. Even amid daily struggles and unexpected challenges, there are those daily reminders of what to be grateful for. And in our small but hardworking and creative community, we can share stories and remind each other. As the words above describe - "The choice to bless the world...is an act of recognition, a confession of surprise...".

Let us be surprised and know that our presence in the world is a blessing in itself. It may seem hard to believe at times, to know that it takes courage and humor, gentleness and strength to live what we believe. These aren't easy times - there is violence and unrest, inequality and injustice, and a hundred causes to focus on. But so many of us chose "community" as the core of what we value in our congregation, and it takes each one of us to build and sustain that connection. It may be the most important work that we engage in. So may we have moments of insight, time to relax and rest, opportunities to create, and time together in these weeks of summer, choosing to bless the world.

With gratitude, Rev. Telos

Universalist Society of Strafford, Vermont
220th Annual Meeting
June 4th, 2017, John Freitag Presiding

Members Present: Andrew L., Suzanna L., John F., Lee F., Denise T., Marissa M., Tara B., Barbara K., Dawn H., Phil Y., Katy B., Dick J., Pam and Dick W., Telos W.(minister)

Welcome and Opening words: John Freitag

Reading of the annual minutes of 2016: Accepted as read

Ministers Report: Telos shared written report, and then an overview. She overlaid our local and congregational work on our UU principles that we covenant to affirm and promote. Here are some highlights:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person - We celebrated Fred and Lorry's long-time work and commitment to our congregation with Bon Voyage brunch in January; our joys and concerns during worship bring us together as community of caring.

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations - As a community, we strive to listen and hear one another, and to offer support. Throughout the year, we have supported members and friends as they faced illnesses and challenges, life transitions and new experiences. We received a Chalice Lighter's Grant this year for \$5,000 to support the construction of our handicapped ramp that will make our church accessible and open to everyone!

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

- Worship and Services: This past year, several themes included journey and pilgrimage, truth in all its various forms, finding our strengths, discovering ways that our history can inform the times we are living in, the power of love and ways to help in saving our good earth. Church members and friends have generously led a wide and wonderful variety of interesting and illuminating 3rd Sunday services on ideas and subjects close to their hearts. From *Exploring our Lunar Heritage* with Marissa, the *Meaning of Time* with Phil and *Contemplative Aging* with John, to an exploration of the *Covenant of U.U. Pagans* led by Dawn H.. Fred W. asked *Who Am I? Who Are You?*, Dick H. offered *The Stones Can Speak* and Tara invited people to share writings that were meaningful to them, and to reflect and re-commit to the visioning process that members embarked on in 2012-2013.

- I offer stories and coordinate activities for our Children's Religious Exploration program related to our worship services and monthly themes; in conversation with area UU congregations about hosting K - 1st Our Whole Lives series

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and society at large

- Each month our board members gather to discuss and make decisions regarding the congregation including ideas for raising funds, building restoration (preserving our stained glass windows and ensuring that the steeple light shines at night), budget review, community involvement, outreach, and worship. And once a year, we hold our Annual Meeting where church members have an opportunity to discuss, vote and review on matters of importance from the budget to nominating new board members and social action efforts to ways we can support our communities.
- We coordinated and hosted a big fundraiser this year, the Mardi Gras Celebration - an event for all ages with dancing and King Cakes, limbo and costumes, live music with the Pillsbury Slow Boys and a silent auction! John F. and I held monthly meetings that a number of members were able to attend; we worked with community folks and local businesses to get sponsorships (John worked hard!) and we had help with cooking, ticket sales and decorating too. We can *all* feel really good about our congregation offering a big festive event for all ages, and we made a bit of money toward the window restoration too, including a generous donation from the Coburn family.
- We made and sold pretzels and popcorn again at the 4th of July celebration in Strafford last summer.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all

- We participated in the *Guest At Your Table* program again this year to support the UU Service Committee - This year's UUSC theme was *Defying Hate*, highlighted people promoting freedom, combating racial and religious persecution.
- Many of us are also involved in local and global causes supporting efforts dear to our hearts.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

- Suzanna L. attended the yearly Annual Meeting of the VT Quebec Univ. Convention; I attend meetings and workshops with my UU colleagues and serve as a Good Officer, supporting my fellow ministers and members.
- We held our Community Thanksgiving Service at Our Lady of Light Chapel and our Easter Sunrise Service at Gove Hill
- I participated in the Women's Wellness Fair in Vershire with a UU/ USS table highlighting our community.

Moderator's Report: John delivered details - Grateful for another year of Telos's work, and hopeful to have her for many more years

- Getting bids for handicap ramp; work to begin soon
- No other major projects that appear on the horizon for this year unless an emergency comes up. We will apply again to Historic Preservation Trust for another window, but the first priority windows are already completed so can wait until 2018 on additional windows.

Treasurers Report: Suzanna delivered details - Suzanna shared assets, liabilities, budget review of this year, and projected budget for next year.

- 2017-2018 Budget Discussion: In revenue section, possible window grant money. In the expense section, we will be taking from increased principle to apply towards ramp costs. Continue to cap pulpit speakers, and a marginal increase for Telos. Repairing joints of the loose carpets. Marissa and Tara have talked about redoing our web site; exploring hosting service - \$100 placeholder. We did really well on grants this year. Keep momentum for next year!

Motion: Approve the budget as amended. Approved unanimously.

Election of Officers:

- Moderator: (1 year) John Freitag
- Assistant Moderator: (1 year) Marissa Mazzucco
- Treasurer: (1 year) Suzanna Liepmann
- Secretary: (1 year) Open
- Trustee: (3 year) Katy Botsford
- Trustee: (1 year to finish Fred's term) Dick Josler

Motion: Approve slate as introduced. Approved unanimously.

New Business:

- Update on Strategic Plan from Tara: Talked about what is most important to the membership as individuals; talking about Church community; feels more like a community with a minister as the glue; great conversations, updates from last time (4 years) and looking to carry it forward. Hopefully this next document can also be a vision for the next four years
- We are entitled to have two people be delegates at GA. We can participate digitally, even if we don't want to actually attend. Tara and Marissa will be our delegates. Motion: approved.
- Gratitude to Pam Whitfield for her music at Sunday services
- Wedding Coming up: Jasmin Jamison (getting married this summer, same church as her grandparents, Melvin and Sue Coburn) - July 7th and Melvin will be presiding. John will be here to help supervise
- Church Cleaning went smoothly. Thanks to everyone for their assistance. It looks like it is good shape.
- Moving forward, we will do some policy changes around working with outside groups and for rentals.
- Dawn trained as volunteer chaplain at Gifford; nice to have copy of the UU hymnal, UU World magazine, other materials. Possibly order a new one or do some other work to help support this process.

Adjourned: 12:23 pm

If you weren't able to attend our Annual Meeting and would like copies of any of the reports, please contact a board member, trustee or Rev. Telos and we can send you reports.

Holy Days, Days to Remember

July 4 - Independence Day

July 9 - Martyrdom of the Bab - Bahai founder of the Babi religion,
forerunner to Baha'u'llah and the Bahai faith

July 9 - Asalha Puja Day - Buddhist

July 11 - St. Benedict Day - Catholic Christian

July 11 - Orthodox Christian

July 13 - Ulambana - Obon - Japanese Buddhist festival to honor deceased ancestors.

Involves lighting of bonfires, traditional meals, paper lanterns, folk dances.

July 13 - 15 - Obon - Shinto

July 15 - St. Vladimir the Great Day - Orthodox Christian

July 23 - Khordad Sal (Birth of Prophet Zaranthushttra) - Zoroastrian

July 25 - St. James the Great Day - Christian