



The United Church of Strafford News

PO Box 124 • Strafford, VT • 05072 • 802-765-4585
Located on the Strafford Green, 230 Justin Morrill Hwy, Sunday services at 10 a.m.



Winter 2016

Mark Your Calendar!



Holiday Events:

- Thetford Chamber Singers** - Wednesday, November 30 at 7 pm.
- Christmas pageant** - Sunday, December 18 at 5 pm.
- Christmas eve candlelight service** - Saturday, December 24 at 8 pm.
- Christmas morning service of carols and readings** - Sunday, December 25 at 10 am.

Office hours: Thursday, December 1, 3-6 pm; Wednesday, December 7 & 14, 2-5 pm; Thursday, December 22, 2-5 pm.

Lectionary readings:

- 1st Sunday of Advent, Hope, November 27: Isaiah 2: 1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13: 11-14; Matthew 24: 36-44.
- 2nd Sunday of Advent, Peace, December 4: Isaiah 11: 1-10; Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19; Romans 15: 4-13; Matthew 3: 1-12.
- 3rd Sunday of Advent, Joy, December 11: Isaiah 35: 1-10; Psalm 146: 5-10 and/or Luke 1: 46b-55; James 5: 7-10; Matthew 11: 2-11.
- 4th Sunday of Advent, Love, December 18: Isaiah 7: 10-16; Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19; Romans 1: 1-7; Matthew 1: 18-25.
- Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24 and Sunday, December 25: Isaiah 9: 2-7; Isaiah 62: 6-12; Isaiah 52: 7-10; Psalms 96, 97, 98; Luke 2: 1-20; John 1: 1-14.

Just a reminder – if you desire a visit with Pastor Lynn or the deacons, please call the church, or email Lynn at lynn.wickberg@gmail.com or call her at the parsonage number: 765-2710 or reach out to the Deacons and they will direct you to appropriate support.

On-Line...

unitedchurchstr.wix.com/unitedchurchstr#
FACEBOOK - @UCStrafford

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Music Notes

What a joy it is to have Annemieke McLane with us as music director. Both the adult and youth choirs are benefiting from her direction, enthusiasm, and talent.

Dear Music friends,
First: songs filled with hope and Love, are needed, especially in these times, so if you feel like joining in for Christmas Eve Service, 8pm, please let me know asap, if I have not heard from you already.

Children's chorus will sing too! Children's rehearsals are Sundays 11:15am, except 11/27.

To the Adult choir - we will sing "Magnum Mysterium", by Lauridsen and if we have enough voices "O Holy Night", by J. Rutter.

Also, a call to instrumentalists to play along. We will be starting with the repertoire every Sunday morning in December 9am, before the church service, and these rehearsals are also for church service music in those mornings, so you can sing with us if you like.

Extra rehearsals for traveling-in families etc, are on Dec 22, 7-8:30pm and Dec. 23rd 7-8:30pm

For locals: please, learn your music with us as soon as you can by popping by. It is not hard, but 'layered' so the more you get used to harmonies, blends, balance etc, the more beautiful it will be!

For 'far away' -ers. I can mail scores if you can read music and let me know what your voice type is:)

I can't wait to hear all voices join in song, and I look forward to hear from you.

Blessings,
Annemieke

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From our Pastor

Dear community, near and far, of the United Church of Strafford,

The church year is drawing to a close as winter weather draws near, evidenced by the snow falling outside the window, the change from the gospel of Luke to that of Matthew, and the deacons steadfastly preparing for the holy days to come. Next Sunday is the Church's new year with the beginning of the season of Advent. This time of anticipation of newness of life with hopes of peace, of wholeness - for ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors near and far and globally with all of creation - is given expression through the words of the prophets of old:

"God will judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall

they learn war any more." Isaiah 2: 4 (NRSV)

And as we light the candles of the Advent wreath - of hope, of peace/shalom, of joy, of love, of the Christ child - in the weeks ahead, we hear words of encouragement written for the faith community in Rome twenty centuries ago still being spoken to us today:

"May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one, another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Romans 15: 5-7 (NRSV)

Thus as we gather together as a manifestation of God's kingdom living and growing here and now on earth, all are invited and welcomed to join their voices and hearts - to pray, to sing, to lament and to rejoice and to give thanks, to question and wonder and listen. Part of what we will ponder is questions of: what are the seeds - of love, of joy, of peace, of hope - growing in you and growing in each other and in our world? What of those seeds might we plant, water, and nurture in our world and one another to help bring about and be part of God's peaceable kingdom here and now? What is God pruning in our lives?

May you know God's abundant grace and guidance in this time of expectant waiting to celebrate - both the Christ child's birth of years gone by and of continued birth and new life in our world now as God is still creating.

Shalom,
Pastor Lynn

Mission Works!

First, the Mission Committee would like to thank all of those who contributed to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering for Hurricane Matthew relief. We sent off \$670 for this important work of mission.

As reported in the Strafford News, the Mission Committee has been busy this year, presenting a check for \$2,000 to Newton School in ongoing support for

the Healthhub program. The church feels that our children are our most important asset and deserve comprehensive and consistent health care during their formative years.

Also, in continuation of our support of the Veteran's Place in Northfield, VT, the Mission Committee purchased two new sofas and delivered them. They were gratefully accepted and immediately used with gladness.

Magazines continue to be collected for local hospitals. Please place current magazines in the back of the sanctuary to be delivered. Please leave the covers on and remove any name/address information on the front page with a magic marker or just cut out that section. Food donations for local food shelves are also appreciated.

As always, we are always looking for either missions to support or service work. Please let one of us know if you have an idea!

Thank you for all of your support!
Danette Harris, chair

The 2016 – 17 Pledge Drive!

The Stewardship Committee reports 26 pledging units (individuals or families), down slightly from last year. How we miss Ned, Nancy and Pat! Please consider pledging to the church or increasing your pledge to help us meet this year's budget.

Thank you!
The Stewardship Committee

Trustees Report

Our treasurer reports that we are on track financially. The trustees have recently replaced the septic system at the parsonage – an unanticipated expense which was miraculously much less cost that it might have been. Blessing abound!

Those painting projects that were put on hold until after the septic work will be continued this winter. When it warms back up in the spring, the trustees will look into repairing the tolling hammer of the bell in the bell tower.

Along with preparing the music director's contract, the trustees are working closely with the stewardship committee and the search committee to assure the proper financial considerations are being made as the church searches for a settled pastor.

A Poem
by Mel Goertz

a Nuthatch perched
on the bark of an old tree
resting – upside down

Religious Ed

At the June council meeting, it was agreed to provide childcare every Sunday. We are grateful to Sophie Prescott, Maeve Varney and Julia Martin who have been helping us out providing care as their schedule allows. If you know of someone who might be interested as well, please let us know.

Imagine a Church

Your nine-member pastor search committee is making steady progress in our search for a settled pastor. In October, the committee met with Pam Lucas, Associate Conference Minister of the VT Conference UCC to discuss resumes received from the American Baptist Conference (ABC) and the VTCUCC. We reviewed the candidate rating worksheet used to evaluate each candidate's resume and to rate key aspects of each resume. At the next meeting, in November, every member of the committee brought in their individual lists of candidate strengths and some key requirements from the church profile that was provided to each applicant.

We reviewed our lists, discussed the key points, and arrived at a set of common points. From that discussion, Joey was able to craft a common list of strengths we are looking for and also requirements that an applicant must meet, such as being a ½ time pastor and living in the parsonage.

We will meet again the last weekend in November to review the common rating list. As part of the meeting, we will discuss the resume forms from the ABC and VTCUCC to make sure that each committee member is clear on how to apply the rating list. Then we will begin the process of reviewing resumes and rating each applicant.

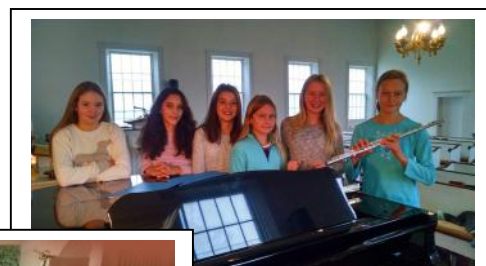


From the Nominating Committee

Many helping hands keep the church vibrant. Please consider volunteering to serve on a board or committee. We have openings for two deacons, one trustee, and the clerk. Volunteering is both rewarding time spent in community and so very valuable to the church.

CHURCH CONTACTS

Moderator: Bill Burden
Pastor: Interim Pastor Lynn Wickberg
Music Director: Annemieke McLane
Treasurer: Kerry Claffey
Clerk: Open
Deacons: Rebecca Bailey (chair), Kim Arsenault, Greg Lewis, Gretchen Hannon, two openings
Trustees: John Hawkins (chair), John Echeverria, Open
Committees:
Pastoral Relations: John Echeverria, Greg Lewis, Danette Harris
Religious Education: Kathy Robinson (co-chair), open (co-chair),
Stewardship: Joey Hawkins (chair), June Solsaa, Randy Coffin
Missions: Danette Harris (chair), Bill and Dot Burden, Kim Arsenault, Martha Manheim
Hospitality: Open (chair), Laura Lewis
Endowment: Ken Bushnell (chair), John Hawkins, Kevin Plunkett
Nominating: RJ Farley (chair), Hazel Lewis, with assistance from Ken Bushnell



Annemieke's Youth Choir above, Search Committee hard at work, and the wonderful waitstaff for Lord's Acre supper below. Blessings truly abound!