



*Brookline Community Church*  
*July 23, 2023*  
*Rev. Catherine Merrill, Minister*

Photo by [khezez | خزاز](#):

In today's reading, Jacob's "ladder" would be better translated as "ramp" or "ziggurat". Ziggurats were built in Mesopotamia to create sacred spots where heaven and earth would meet.

[Prelude: \*Be Thou My Vision for Trumpet & Piano\* by Brandon Dicks](#)

**Call To Worship, Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24, pp. 503 & 504:**

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

Leader: O LORD, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.

**All: You search out my path and my lying down,  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O LORD, you know it completely.**

Leader: You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.

**All: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain it?**

Leader: Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

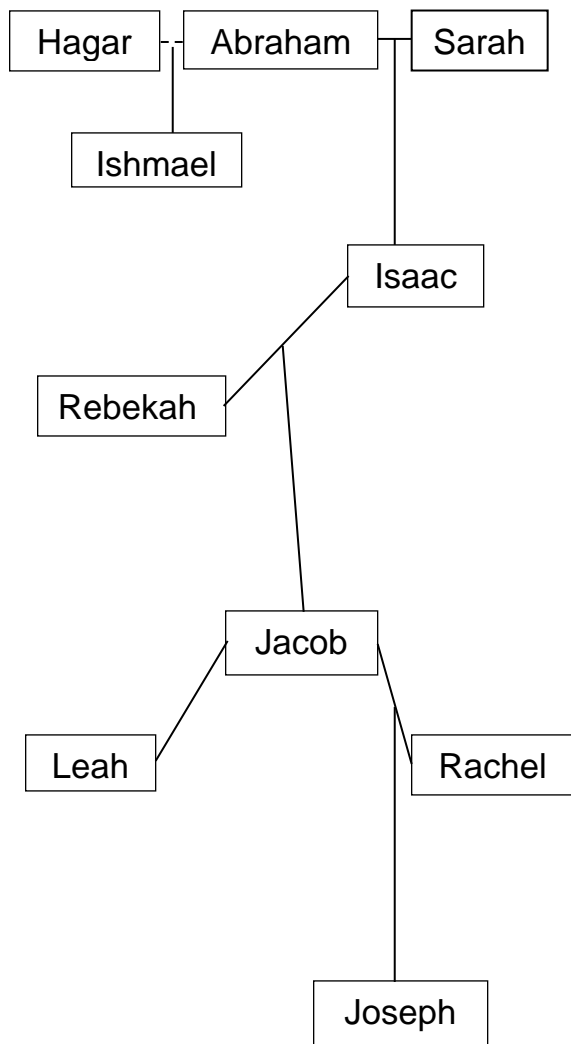
**All:** If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

**Leader:** If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night',  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

**All:** Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my thoughts.  
See if there is any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

**RESPONSE:** [#820 Threefold Amen \(Danish\)](#)

**Children's Message:** *Reviewing the Family Tree*



**Hymn: [Jacob's Ladder by Bible Time](#)**

We are climbing Jacob's ladder  
We are climbing Jacob's ladder  
We are climbing Jacob's ladder  
Soldiers of the Cross

Behold I'm with you and will watch  
o'er  
Behold I'm with you and will watch  
o'er  
Behold I'm with you and will watch  
o'er  
Soldiers of the Cross

Every round goes higher and higher  
Every round goes higher and higher  
Every round goes higher and higher  
Soldiers of the Cross

Behold I'm with you and will watch  
o'er  
Behold I'm with you and will watch  
o'er  
Behold I'm with you and will watch  
o'er  
Soldiers of the Cross  
Soldiers of the cross.

If you have a favorite hymn you'd like to include in our worship service, just send it along and I'll look for a good place for it.

**A Prayer of Joys and Concerns<sup>1</sup>:**

**Let us recite the Lord's Prayer together:**

**Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

[For next week, please feel free to send me your joys & concerns and I'll include them in our prayers: [minister@bccnh.org](mailto:minister@bccnh.org) or call/text (857) 259-7269.]

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<sup>1</sup> Today's Prayer of Joys and Concerns was inspired by Rev. Jill Colley Robinson, Green Mountain District Superintendent who offered the UMC's Daily Prayer on May 5, 2023.

**Hymn: Nearer My God to Thee by Anne Murray**

Nearer, my God, to Thee. Nearer to  
Thee  
E'en though it be a cross, that raiseth  
me

Still all my song shall be nearer, my  
God, to Thee  
Nearer, my God, to Thee nearer to  
Thee

Though like the wanderer the sun  
gone down  
Darkness be over me my rest a  
stone

Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my  
God, to Thee

Nearer, my God, to Thee nearer to  
Thee

Or, if on joyful wing cleaving the sky  
Sun, moon, and stars forgot upward  
I'll fly

Still all my song shall be nearer, my  
God, to Thee

Nearer, my God, to Thee nearer to  
Thee

Nearer, my God, to Thee nearer to  
Thee

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 28:10-22, p. 22:**

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you.'

**RESPONSE: #820 Threefold Amen (Danish)**

**Reflection on the Scripture:**

**Hymn: *The Blessing* by Elevation Church Kids**

The Lord bless you, and keep you  
Make His face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you

The Lord turn His face towards you,  
and give you peace

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen  
Amen

The Lord bless you, and keep  
you  
Make His face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you

The Lord turn His face towards you,  
and give you peace

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen  
Amen

May His favor, be upon you  
and a thousand  
generations  
and your family, and your children,  
and their children, and their children

May His favor, be upon you  
and a thousand generations  
and your family, and your children,  
and their children, and their children

May His presence go before you,  
and behind you, and beside you,  
all around you, and within you

He is with you

He is with you

In the morning, in the evening  
in your coming, and your going  
in your weeping, and rejoicing

He is for you. He is for you.

He is for you. He is for you.

He is for you. He is for you.

He is for you. He is for you.

He is for you.

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen  
Amen

Amen Amen Amen

**MINISTRY OF SHARING**

**\*DOXOLOGY: #809 “Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.”**

**\*Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We’ve Been Given:**

**God blesses us that we might carry  
that blessing into the world.**

**We pray that you would use us,  
for we come in the name of Jesus  
and by the movement of your Spirit in this place.**

## Announcements

### **A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World (a riff on Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24)**

Leader: Loving God, you know me better than any human could,

**All: You don't just know me, you seek me out, you keep getting to know me more fully, more deeply.**

Leader: Like a potter with clay on the wheel, you shape me from all sides

**All: At times it's too much for perishable me to be known by such a huge and ancient being**

Leader: Even if I wanted to (and a lot of times I *really* want to), there's nowhere to hide from you. Of course you're in heaven, and on earth. You're even in the God-forsaken places, we humans were sure you forgot.

**All: If I fly through my day from one end to the other, if I go from sea to shining sea, your hand is there to catch me, to shield me, from the evil I find and the evil I bring with me.**

Leader: I can hide in the dark, but there is nowhere that is dark to you, you bring forgiving light to even the deepest shadows of sin.

**All: So search me, O God, and know me. I am unwilling to struggle anymore to hide from you. I have let go of my wicked ways and am already walking in your way, all the days of my life.**

Leader: Amen and

**All: Amen.**

[CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: # 839 "God Be With You Till We Meet Again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again."](#)

[Postlude: Be Thou My Vision \(In the Darkness\) by Likewise Worship](#)

*Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.*

## Notes:

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### Psalm 139

The dilemma for readers of Psalm 139 is how to connect the often-quoted beautiful poetic imagery of verses 1-18 with the shocking petition against enemies in verses 19-22. The key root word in the psalm is “know”. God’s knowing runs through verses 1-18 and undergirds verses 19-24.

*Verses 1-6.* In the psalm’s first poetic unit, God knows the entire life of the speaker: sitting down, rising up, thinking, lying down, walking, and speaking. God examines and knows the speaker completely. First- and second-person pronouns dominate these verses, suggesting that the relationship between God and the speaker – the I-Thou relationship – is the central focus.

*Verses 7-12.* The divine presence is more encompassing than the speaker can imagine; the poetic imagery is remarkable. The affirmation of the divine present in *Sheol*, the underworld, is most unusual. Most psalms portray *Sheol* as a place of divine absence. As judge of all the earth, God sees all.

*Verses 13-18.* This poetic unit affirms that God was present at the beginning of the speaker’s life. So from the beginning God has known this person who is “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

*Verses 19-24.* The prayer is an urgent plea that God defeat the enemies and remove their injustice from the petitioner’s world. In the context of the close I-Thou relationship so powerfully expressed in this psalm, the petitioner urges God to make an end of these evil ones. They loathe God and the faithful of the worshipping community, so the speaker confesses as an act of trust, to hating and loathing these enemies of God and the faithful. The petitioner hopes that God will see that this faithful one is not among the evil ones who oppose God and will lead the speaker in the ways of faith.

Adapted from Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalms*, in *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 580-584.



## PRAYER LIST (7/23/23)

- Friends & family of Jane Jukes, Edith Corey, Sandy Garvin, Scott Higgins, Ed Krom, Ron Whitebred, Chris Crowder, Morris Nicholson, Eddy Razzaboni, Flora Kenyon, Polly Foley, Ken Perrin.
- For Rick, Nancy's cousin, diagnosed with Stage 4 kidney cancer
- For Jen, the Aitken's friend, diagnosed with cancer
- For Alex, Marjorie's friend, whose diagnosis at the Mayo Clinic means more chemotherapy to hopefully get a better handle on the cancer.
- For Dave Joki and Dave Flannery, both members of the Brookline Fire Department, both fighting cancer
- For Eric, Rena's high school friend's son, who is having serious side effects from his cancer treatment
- For Paul, John's friend, who's in a tough fight with cancer.
- For Renee, Donna's nephew's wife, going through cancer treatment
- For Brandon, Jill & Kevin's friend, on the heart transplant list.
- For Frank, Marjorie's friend, with a spot on his lung which requires a biopsy
- For Okie, Marjorie's friend, whose pain control medications aren't working
- For Jessica & Elianna, recovering together from a pair of broken arms
- For Kim, Donna's relative, who has had complications in her liver transplant and is having to go through more medical procedures
- For Mark, John Nicholson's brother, who's facing medical complications
- For Kevin, Kevin's dad, who's facing some medical issues
- For Leo, Amy's son George's friend, still recovering in the hospital
- For Allison, Megan's friend, who broke her elbow and her pelvis
- For Tim, Megan's friend, who passed out unexpectedly in the shower
- For Karl Crossman, Rena's son-in-law, home after a hospital stay
- For Kaelyn, Jessica's daughter, making a tough journey
- For Mike, Susan & Russell's daughter Stacey's friend in Florida, whose recovery is going to include changes in his personality and identity
- For Nancy, Kym's sister, who's having a second hip replacement surgery on the same hip
- For Rena, as she figures out the contours of her new life with her change in vision
- For the friends and family of our former UMC Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar who passed away completely unexpectedly on Wednesday, only a few months into his retirement.
- For the people of Ukraine, who fight on, even as the world looks elsewhere
- For the people of Taiwan, searching for peace in the face of hostility
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers
- Individuals serving in our military & their families



## **Household Prayer: Morning<sup>2</sup>**

In whatever shelter I wake this morning, I know this place is holy because you meet me here. As I wash my body and prepare for the day, I remember baptismal waters and the claim upon my life. Wherever darkness looms, Sovereign God, traffic in mercy this day. Traffic in mercy this day. Amen.

## **Household Prayer: Evening**

As darkness spreads over the land, I trust that you move in it. As I yield the night to sleep and dreams, I pray you would remake me into a servant bold, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

## **Questions for Reflection**

How has your understanding of the relationship between suffering and faith (or vulnerability and trust) changed over time? What experiences of God's grace do you need to acknowledge and anoint?

## **Daily Awareness Reflection<sup>3</sup>**

At the end of the day, I've been asking myself the following questions. I jot down the answers and ask them again the next evening. I've found it helps me to remain centered as well as increasing my awareness of God in my life. It takes about 10 minutes.

1. Slow down. Stop. Prepare yourself to pray by becoming aware of the love with which God looks on you ...
2. Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks to God for them ...
3. Ask God that this be a time of special grace and revelation ...
4. With God, review the day. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, and your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which have not? What does God want to say to you about both? ...
5. Ask for forgiveness for failures/omissions, for healing from their effects ...
6. Look forward to the following day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God's desire for your life ...

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<sup>2</sup> The Morning & Evening Prayer and Question for Reflection are reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), 31.

## **Announcements**

### **Help taking the piano in the church's front hall to the Transfer Station**

We're looking for some strong souls and a pick up truck to take the spinet piano in the front hall to the Transfer Station. If you can provide either one, please contact Susan Haight ([sdlhaight@gmail.com](mailto:sdlhaight@gmail.com)).

### **Making Space for Newness in the Church**

Churches have a habit of collecting items that bring joy for a while before converting to clutter. So if you have something that you think might be worth having appraised so it can go brighten someone else's life, please take it to the second floor Youth Room and leave it on the table that used to be in the Deacons' Room. Contact Susan Haight ([sdlhaight@gmail.com](mailto:sdlhaight@gmail.com)) for more info.

### **Quarterly Church Statements via email!**

As we upgrade the church's accounting software, we're experimenting with sending your quarterly statements via email. Let Bill ([financechair@bccnh.org](mailto:financechair@bccnh.org)) know if you need any corrections.

### **Brookline's Food Pantry welcomes garden produce**

If you've got extra produce from your garden, the Food Pantry would welcome it! Click [here for more details](#).

### **2023 Parking Passes are available for the Grove**

You'll need a parking pass to park for our Lake worship services in July & August. For membership details and hours when you can get that taken care of, [see the town website](#). If you aren't a Brookline resident, contact Candy ([secretary@bccnh.org](mailto:secretary@bccnh.org), 603-801-5918) and she'll explain the system.

### **Meals on Wheels Dine Out Club for folks over 60**

The Dine Out Club is a donation-based meal program for people over the age of 60, with a suggested donation of \$4.00 per meal.\* Upon signing up, you will receive a Dine Out Club card which can be used for meals from a specially curated menu at a restaurant partner location. [More details are available here](#).

### **B – S.A.F.E.: Brookline - Special Assistance for Emergencies**

If you have special accommodation needs or require special assistance during a possible or actual emergency within the town, the information would be helpful to local responders. This could include information on complicated medical condition or medical equipment, communication challenges such as hearing loss or inability to speak, etc. [The form](#) is completely voluntary. It should be returned to the Ambulance chief.

## Critical Home Repair Program from Habitat for Humanity

The program provides home repairs to low to moderate income homeowners who are struggling to maintain their homes due to age, disability or family circumstances. The program focuses on health, life and safety code issues. It allows Habitat for Humanity to partner with families to help them reclaim their homes with pride, dignity, and in safety without being disrupted by the uncertainty, trauma and expense of moving. [More information and an application](#) are available on Habitat's website.

## The Church has 12 Covid Test Kits, Take & Replace!

NH made Covid supplies available to certain non-profits. We took advantage of the program to snag 12 Covid test kits. If they become hard to find again, feel free to grab one (Candy [secretary@bccnh.org](mailto:secretary@bccnh.org) can help) and replace it later.

## Brookline Food Pantry

The Brookline food pantry is open on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10-2:00 for drop-offs [Brookline Food Pantry's Facebook page](#) has updates. And there's now [a long, robust Google doc](#) that shows what they need.

If you know of anyone who could use some help from the Food Pantry, please let Angie or Amy know.

## Help Lines

You may know someone who needs some support beyond what you can provide.

- Suicide prevention: 1-800-273-8255 (or 988)
- Sexual assault: 1-800-656-4673
- Domestic violence: 1-800-799-7233

## The church's financial obligations continue.

	Actual Income	Actual Expenses	Income vs. Expenses +/-
June	\$51,136	\$49,469	\$1,667

There are several ways to send your offering.

1. Text "GIVE" to 603-506-4455 for your first time. Click "Sign In" then "Register for an Account"
2. Scan the QR code
3. Mail to: Brookline Community Church, PO Box 507, Brookline, NH 03033.

