

Brookline Community Church
December 17, 2023



Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Lighting the Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is shaped in a ring. It shows the circle of God's unbroken love. Each week we will invite a family to light the candles to bring us together in the warm light of God's love.

Lighter 1: In the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptizer points to Jesus:
as the people were filled with expectation, ...
questioning whether John might be the Messiah,
John answered them by saying,
"I baptize you with water,
but one who is more powerful than I is coming ...
He will baptize you
with the Holy Spirit and fire." (*Luke 3:15-16*)

Lighter 2: If we follow Jesus Christ,
we will get everything we hope for,
and more than we bargained for
We light our third candle to praise God
whose Spirit comes to us
with disturbing and wonderful blessings.

(Light the two purple candles and the pink candle)

Lighter 1: Living Christ, give us faith to trust you
hope to follow you,
and love to live for you.

All: We trust you, we love you, we praise you. Amen.

Light the Advent candle three,
Think of heavenly harmony;
Angels singing "Peace on Earth,"
At the blessed Savior's birth

Refrain:

Candle, candle burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

Prayer of Invocation

The First Lesson: Genesis 3:8-15, pp. 2-3

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'

The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.'

***Response: #135 "O Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus"**

The Second Lesson: Genesis 22:15-18, p. 16

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.'

***Response: #152 “Angels We Have Heard on High”**

The Third Lesson: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, p. 555

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

***Response: #170 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”**

Prayers of the People

The response to “Hear us, O God.” is “**Your mercy is great.**”

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.

The Fourth Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-9, p. 558

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

***Response: #151 “Go Tell It on the Mountain”**

The Fifth Lesson: Luke 1:26-38, p. 831

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

***Response: #171 “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”**

The Sixth Lesson: Matthew 1:18-23, p. 783

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

***Response: #133 “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”**

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:**

**O Mighty One,
who scatters the proud and fills the hungry,
by your Holy Spirit let your word leap in us
and bring to our yearning
the joy that comes with new beginnings and renewed lives.
Accept these gifts and our lives
for the furtherance of your Kingdom on this earth.
Amen.**

The Seventh Lesson: Luke 2:8-16, p. 833

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

***Response: #147 “Away in a Manger”**

The Eighth Lesson: Matthew 2:1-11, pp. 783-784

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: “And you,

Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.” ’

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

***Response: #185 “We Three Kings”**

The Ninth Lesson: John 1:1-14, p. 862

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

***Response: #146 “Joy to the World”**

Collect & Benediction

*** Congregational Response: # 839**

“God be with you ‘til we meet again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again.”

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (12/17/23)

- Friends & family of Morris Nicholson, Eddy Razzaboni, Flora Kenyon, Polly Foley, Ken Perrin.
- For Dave Joki and Dave Flannery, both members of the Brookline Fire Department, both fighting cancer
- For Paul, John's friend, who's in a tough fight with cancer.
- For Kim, Donna's relative, whose liver transplant had a setback
- For Brandon, Jill & Kevin's friend, on the heart transplant list.
- For Mark, John Nicholson's brother, who's facing medical complications
- For Kevin, Kevin's dad, who's facing some medical issues
- For Tim, Megan's friend, recovering from medical setbacks
- For the friends and family of Leo, Amy's son George's best friend,
- For a friend, figuring out a way to pay her rent
- For a family in transition
- For Zane, Jessica's friend, who's continuing to recover from his accident
- For John Lee's step-mother diagnosed with pancreatic cancer
- For Warren, George Razzaboni's relative, diagnosed with lung cancer
- For Wicznadine, leaving the Compassion International program
- For Madge, Megan's friend, whose mother passed away.
- For all those who are grieving during the holidays
- For Bob, Jill's uncle, who is entering hospice
- For Natalie, Marjorie's sister-in-law, recovering from her third heart attack.
- For the friends and family of Clayton, Marjorie's nephew and Natalie's son. May they know the love that surrounds them.
- For Alison, Susan's friend, whose breast cancer has returned at Stage 4.
- For Tina, Barbara's friend, who is beginning chemotherapy
- For Kim, Amy's friend, recovering from a liver transplant
- For the friends and family of Lucy, Candy's dear friend's mother-in-law
- For the people of Israel and Palestine, may they find a way forward
- 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: Morning¹

Light of the world, you greet me this morning with new possibilities. Shine brightly, I pray, until I see into the dark places of this world, and into the dark places of my own life. I want to follow you in paths of justice, speak up with you for liberty, and bend with you toward the brokenhearted, even the broken places within myself. I trade in my faint spirit for your mantle of praise—and with my whole being I will rejoice in you. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Restore me, O God, from the rush of the day. Let me dream this night of all the great things you have done. As the darkness comes and these little lights in my house glow, I give thanks for the greater Light no darkness can overcome. To anyone who mourns or sits in prison or fears danger this night, bring the peace that only you can give. You are faithful, and I know you will do this. In Christ. Amen.

Christmas Eve Household Prayer: Morning

God of hope, peace, joy, and love, this day is so full! For children, this day is one of excitement and anticipation; for others, this day is filled with responsibilities and activity. Some are traveling this day to be with family or friends, while others spend the day quietly and alone. Be with us in all our varied circumstances and moods. I pray that I, and all those within my circles of care, will be especially attentive to the angels' good news: that you have come to dwell among us in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth. In this is our great joy. Amen.

Christmas Eve Household Prayer: Evening

Loving God, this night holds so much for me — people and places from long ago are brought near in memories redeemed; my present companions, as well as present cares, are held in tenderness. Lord, I would hold the whole world in my hands, turning it round and round, so that your light would shine everywhere on everyone with hope and peace.

As it is, I utter this prayer instead — my little light in the shades of night: Hold those I love and all the world in your sure and tender hands, as a mother holds her newborn child. Let your face shine upon us with peace. Gather up the past, the present, and the future into your eternity, where all is reconciled and you are all in all. In the name of him who was born this night, Jesus, who is Christ the Lord. Amen.

Christmas Day Household Prayer: Morning

Eternal God, as I celebrate the birthday of Jesus, may I sing of your love all the days of my life, for you have made me your child forever. In Christ I pray. Amen.

Christmas Day Household Prayer: Evening

Lord, I give thanks for the blessings of this day (which I now name), and I ask your forgiveness for the places where I have failed to reveal your love (which I now name). I give thanks that you have become one of us, that I may become more like you. As I sleep this night, may your goodness shape me to more lovingly reflect your light in the world. Amen.

¹ 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.

Announcements

Thanks for the holiday decorating!

The trustees wanted to thank everyone, including Karen Haight, for helping to make the church look so festive for the holiday season!

Faith Formation: Deepen Your Connection with God: Jan. 7, 8:30a

We will be offering faith formation sessions once a month. In addition to the activities designed for the kids, we'll be offering a separate track of reflections on Christian Faith Practices for the adults.

We meet at 8:30am on Sunday mornings: 1/7, 2/4, 3/3, 4/14 (moving from 4/7 because I usually take the Sunday after Easter off), 5/5, 6/2

Gently Used Winter Clothes can find a good next home

If you have any gently used winter clothes, let Amy (arazz3914@gmail.com) know. She'll find a good home for them.

Email Scams may appear to come from the church!

You may get an email that appears to come from the church or Rev. Cath asking for money or gift cards. We won't ever do that, so you can ignore them.

Unfortunately, mean people make it difficult for all of us.

There's a task list in the Social Hall if you could help with a church project

Some are bigger than others; some will require supplies that the church will provide. If you have a few hours and would be willing to take on a task, we would appreciate the help!

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 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 there's anyone who could use some help from the Food Pantry, please let 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 +/-
November	\$116,035	\$91,374	\$24,661

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.



Poinsettias

This year, the Deacons will be donating a small number of Christmas flowers to help decorate the sanctuary.

Please fill out the form below and give it to a Deacon (Russell H, Barbara HH, John P, Candy T, Jill A), or email your dedication to Candy at secretary@bccnh.org. We will include your dedication in the Christmas Eve bulletin, as we have done in past years.

Dedication deadline: Sunday, December 17th.

Placed by: _____

In Memory of: _____

and/or In Honor of: _____

Merry Christmas!
Thank you!