

Brookline Community Church
January 7, 2024
Rev. Catherine A. Merrill



[Photo by muflih alhababi.](#)

Prelude: *Bethlehem, of noblest cities* by The Gesualdo Six

Call To Worship, Psalm 72:1-7, 12-14

Leader: Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.
May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.

**All: May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.**

Leader: May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.

**All: In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.**

Leader: For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.

**All: From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.**

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

Children's Message: *Where should we look for Jesus now?*

[Hymn: Wise Men Three by St. John's Community Church](#)

Wise men three, clever are we
studied in astronomy.
Saw this star, in the east,
didn't know where it would lead us.

Wise men three, all agree,
here's a great discovery.

Tell us please, where can we
find the baby king Jesus?

Wise men three, all agree,
here's a great discovery.

Tell us please, where can we
find the baby king Jesus?

Or if we don't feel like jumping around as much

[Hymn: Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning by Divine Hymns](#)

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adoring,
Guide where our infant redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dewdrops are shining;
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all!

Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
Fragrance of Edom and offerings divine?
Gems of the mountains and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would His favor secure;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adoring,
Guide where our infant redeemer is laid.

A Prayer of Joys and Concerns:

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 or call/text (857) 259-7269.]

Hymn: We Three Kings by Reawaken Hymns

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts, we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and
mountain
Following yonder star.

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown Him again
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light

Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising, all men raising
Worship Him, God most high

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes of life of gathering gloom
Sorrow, sighing, bleeding, dying
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light

Glorious now behold Him arise
King and God and Sacrifice
Alleluia, Alleluia
Earth to heav'n replies

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light

Sacrament of Communion

Prayer of Confession

Minister: Isaiah proclaimed: Darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and God's glory will appear over you.
Let us acknowledge the darkness in our lives,
repent of our sin,
and receive the light of God's mercy.

**All: Merciful God, Light of the world,
we confess that we have not resisted the darkness
of sin.**

**You deliver the poor and the helpless,
but we have ignored their cry.
You take pity on the weak and the destitute,
but our hearts are hard in the face of their need.
You heal the wounded and save the oppressed
but we have placed our trust in the callous violence
of war.**

**Forgive us, we pray.
Awaken in us sincere repentance
that we may shine with the light of your saving grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Minister: Beloved of God,
thrill and rejoice in God's goodness.

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Invitation to the Table

Minister: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

Minister: Let us give thanks to God most high.

All: It is right to give thanks and praise.

Words of Consecration

Prayer of Thanksgiving

**We give you thanks O God for having renewed and refreshed us with
this sacrament of your love and for being present with us through
Christ. We ask, O God, that our faith be strengthened and our love
for one another be increased that we would be a true witness to your
love. We ask it in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen**

Hymn: Take Us Home By Another Way by Christopher Grundy

Spirit, take us home take us home by another way take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes. Give us strength to walk show us dreams of a better day and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.

The mountains and the hills made low the rough places made plain the tyrants thrown down from their thrones 'til only love remains.

Spirit, take us home take us home by another way take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes. Give us strength to walk show us dreams of a better day and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.

No offerings for billionaires to make them richer still bring all your frankincense and myrrh that the hungry may be filled

Spirit, take us home take us home by another way take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes. Give us strength to walk show us dreams of a better day and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.

So when the proud boys and the klan ask where the Christ child lies just tell 'em that you'll let them know next time you're passing by

Spirit, take us home take us home by another way take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes. Give us strength to walk show us dreams of a better day and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.

So, when things get tough and feet are tired we'll know it'll be okay. Cause we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6, pp. 602-603

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you,

the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

RESPONSE: #820 Threefold Amen (Danish)

Reflection on the Scripture:

Hymn: Arise, Shine, For Your Light Has Come by Jered McKenna

Arise, shine, for your light has come
And the glory of God is on you
Arise, see, though the earth grows
dark
The Lord will arise upon you
The Lord will arise upon you
Nations will come to your light
Lift up your eyes and see
We'll gather together and come to
you
And your love will be all that we know
And your love will be all that we know
Arise, come to the open gates
for the Father is welcoming you
Fear not for the Lord brings peace
and redemption to all who believe
Nations will come to your light
Lift up your eyes and see
We'll gather together and come to
you
And your love will be all that we know
And your love will be all that we know

The sun will not shine cause you'll be
all the light that we need
And violence will end
all the wars that we wage will cease
Oh The sun will not shine cause
you'll be
all the light that we need
And violence will end
all the wars that we wage will cease
We will glorify Your name
We will glorify Your name
Nations will come to your light
Lift up your eyes and see
We'll gather together and come to
you
And your love will be all that we know
And your love will be all that we know
Nations will come to your light
Lift up your eyes and see
We'll gather together and come to
you
And your love will be all that we know
And your love will be all that we know

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:**

**The magi brought gifts to Christ at his nativity
and offered their lives in worship.**

With thankful hearts, we offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

**Loving God,
receive the gifts we offer
in union with Jesus our brother,
and help us to live to the honor and glory of your name. Amen.**

Announcements

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World (a riff on Psalm 72)

Leader: Loving God you call us to leave our homes and lead the world, just as Jesus did, seeking justice for the poor and the voiceless. You urge us to travel to find his people. And you urge us to speak truth to those in positions of political power who do not care for those Jesus loved.

All: Prosperity comes when we care for everyone, when we make sure that no one is left behind. Jesus saw no separation between church and state, between the political and the religious, because it was just life. A life God offered everyone, that we all might find light in the darkness together.

Leader: A strong leader refreshes the community like water that feeds the growth of the earth. A strong leader creates things that endure, not just for a season, but for a long time.

All: May we recognize the kind of leadership that endures, that creates the environment for right relationships and abounding peace, that everyone can build on for generations.

Leader: May great leadership bring out the best of all of our gifts, that together we might offer something royal and religious and sacred.

All: May all those in power pay homage to God's call for justice and protection of the weakest among us.

Leader: God works through us to deliver those who are calling out for help, those who have no one to speak for them, to speak to them, to remember their needs as well as our own.

All: God works through us to save the lives of the weak and the needy, the lives of those who suffer from oppression and violence. Let us remember how precious they are to God and therefore to us.

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: This Year by 3 Heath Brothers

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.

Notes:

Psalm 72

One of the Royal Psalms, Psalm 72 argues that the king has a responsibility to support and sustain the life of the poor and the marginal when they have no resources by which to sustain themselves. The psalm envisions a quite assertive, initiative-taking royal government on behalf of the poor and the needy.

The notion of justice and righteousness has to do with economic maintenance and with the maintenance of an independent judiciary that would not be merely an exploitative tool of the powerful. Thus, the verbs in verse 4, “defend, deliver, crush,” surely concern a viable court system in which the marginal can expect reliable redress from the rapaciousness of an acquisitive society.

The juxtaposition of verses 1-4 and 12-14 concerning care for the vulnerable by the regime and verses 5-7, 8-11, and 15-17 envisioning extravagant well-being for the regime form the contrast that makes the point of the psalm: care for the poor that becomes the basis for economic prosperity in the realm. The unstated but surely implied negative counterpoint is the recognition that neglect of the poor through economic indifference will inevitably lead to military failure and economic collapse.

But what human king or political leader has ever lived up to such expectations? Psalm 72 reminds us that while we cannot perfectly reflect the community creating justice that characterizes God’s purpose, we should also reject a self-indulgent refusal to attempt to bend public power toward genuine communal well-being.

Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalms*, in *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 311-316.



PRAYER LIST (1/7/24)

- Friends & family of Morris Nicholson, Eddy Razzaboni, Flora Kenyon, Polly Foley, Ken Perrin.
- For Dave Joki, member of the Brookline Fire Department, 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 Wiznadine, 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 Ken, Ann's dad, recovering from emergency surgery
- The friends and family of Alice Krom, may then know the love that surrounds them
- Terry, Kym's friend, recovering from a double lung transplant
- Keith Thompson's brother in cardiac intensive care
- For those involved in the shooting at the Charles University in Prague
- For the friends and family of Dave Flannery, member of the Brookline Fire Department, may they know the love that surrounds them
- 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

Loving God, do not let my good intentions become a means of evil. Do not let my trust become cooperation with sin. Do not let my naiveté become an opportunity for wickedness. Make me prudent in acts of mercy, firm in my resistance to evil, and wise in my discernment of wrong, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Loving God, in the journey of life guide me by the star that leads to Jesus, that I may return to you transformed by his love. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

Warned in a dream of Herod's evil intentions, the magi "left for their own country by another road." What could it mean for you to take "another road" as the church concludes the celebrations of the Christmas season?

Daily Awareness Reflection²

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 ...

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.

² Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), 31.

Announcements

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

Rev. Cath is away Jan 8 – 21

If you would normally get in touch with her, both Russell Haight (r.haight9@gmail.com, 603-554-5495) and Barbara Haskell-Higgins (barbarajh@comcast.net, 603-303-6060) from the deacons can get you to the right person who's covering for Catherine while she's away.

Community Reading of King's *I Have a Dream* Speech: Jan 13, Noon

There will be [a community reading of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech](#) at the Brookline Public Library on Saturday, January 13, from noon-1:00pm. All are welcome!

1/14 Worship will be at the Brookline Community Church as usual

We'll join the remote feed to worship with the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta for their King Holiday Weekend service.

1/21 at **!!!9:30am!!! Worship will be in Hollis**

We'll join the Brookline Community Church's band to worship in Hollis at the [Congregational Church of Hollis](#) at 3 Monument Sq. Hollis, NH 03049.

Save the Date: 1/28 after Worship: Annual Meeting!

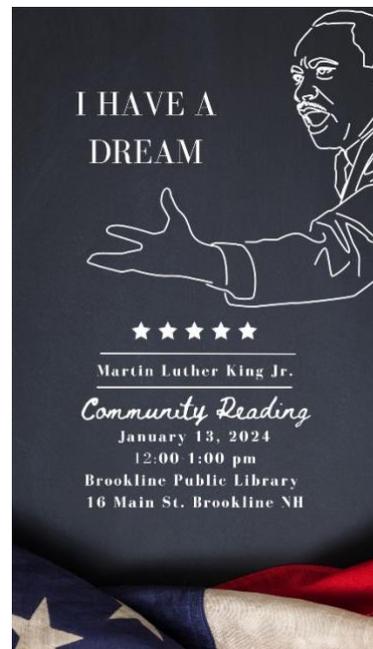
We'll be holding our Annual Meeting (with a potluck lunch) after worship on 1/28!

NH Has a New Emergency Notification System

NH Alerts is a great free way to receive local notifications, including weather, community and emergency alerts. You'll need to download the free Genasys Protect smartphone app to continue to receive alerts after January 1. For the full announcement from the Town of Brookline, [click here](#).

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 +/-
December	\$126,015	\$98,071	\$27,944

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.

