



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
May 3, 2020
The Fourth Sunday of Easter
Good Shepherd Sunday

Every part of worship has a video, so we've gathered them together [in a play list](#). [If you click on "Play All"](#), they'll play from the beginning of the service to the end! And you can just follow along, never clicking on another link. Or you can go through clicking on all the individual links – your choice.

Prelude: [Look at the World by The Smith Ensemble](#)

[No lyrics, just let it help you get settled for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

[Join Carol Cherian, today's lay leader, [in today's centering prayer](#).]

Shepherding God,
in a dangerous world,
let us hear your voice and
come and go through your gate.

We are sitting in the Valley of the Shadow
And we fear
For those we love,
For those we have never met,
For ourselves.

So let us hear your voice
And come and go through your gate
The gate you have placed between us and the world
So that we may be safely gathered into your fold
Sheltered from the terrors of the world
Safe with our Good Shepherd.

Hymn: The Baa Baa Song by Kevin Bueltmann

[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

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.

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

[Rev. Cath [sharing our Joys & Concerns.](#)]

Shepherding God,
in a dangerous world,
let us hear your voice and
come and go through your gate.

We pray for the whole church,
that we may be devoted to your Word
and to universal fellowship,
being generous to all who have need.

We pray that we find many more joys in this time of pandemic. We pray:

For having a more intimate time with God;

For finishing the studio set up, so one unblocked creative path is leading to others;

For a surprise on-line birthday party for Ryan, Donna & Peter's son, with a cake so good, Ryan's wife Andrea had to bake another one;

For A&E coffee being available for delivery;

For Amy being able to speak with her doctor who's in Italy, hunkered down with a newborn and a toddler;

For seeing family, even if it is in awkward and unexpected ways;

For increasing competence with pie crusts;

For a birthday party 6' apart where the wine ran an obstacle course to get to us (put the empty wine glass down, walk away, someone else filled the glass, walk away, go retrieve the wine glass, return to lawn chair and sip – bliss!)

For a growing garden (even if some of the seeds will have to be restarted)

For listening to the last chapters of Stephen King's *The Stand* during Sunday's run;

For discovering that Sandra Dallas' *Tallgrass* was a book we could get lost in;

For Henry, Bob & Linda's grandson, who is healing from his superhero stitches;

For a burger and onion rings, when they were what we most wanted;

For the kind soul who delivered a burger and French fries, just because someone else was missing them;

For the new flowers on our porches, that lift our hearts in pink, orange & yellow;

For creativity being unleashed by a new iPad and pencil;

For improving weather;

For singing in the house, when no one (?maybe when *especially* no one?) can hear us;

For Maggie & Flora, the Drake's moms, who are both doing better and better during the pandemic;

We pray for the earth,
for green pastures and still waters,
that we may restore them to
the goodness and purity that they had
at the time that you created them.

We pray for the people of the world,
their nations, and leaders,
that your wisdom and peace may govern all,
so that no one will fear.

We pray for all those in need,
for those in want,
those ill and those dying,
that we may be the banquet that you set before them
as we anoint them, feed them, and comfort them in your name.

We pray for the easing of the concerns we have found in this time of pandemic.
May we feel your loving presence even closer to us as we pray:

For the blue tape across the floor (even though it is keeping us from tripping over a cable);

For a winter that is just getting to be too long;

For the pain we're carrying that's coming ever closer to the surface, even as we try to be upbeat;

For our kids finishing their school work, especially the college seniors who are facing a very uncertain future;

For all those couples who are facing more togetherness than they ever bargained for;

For the nurses and doctors who are working more than full time jobs and who are being asked to take pay cuts;

For Robin, Amy's sister, who has a lot on her hands;

For the insurance companies which are making a tough time even more challenging;

For the days when work is like getting pecked to death by chickens;

For help sleeping;

For continually facing the unknown;

For families struggling with each other and causing real damage in the process;

For realizing how much social contact we really need;

For the faith of the people, that we all might realize that staying connected to God and staying connected to what is more important in life will bring us the most joy;

For those fearful of dying alone, fearful of being alone;

For Rebecca and Steve, Lindsey & Joel's friends, who lost their son Corey to suicide;

We pray for ourselves, our families, and those we love.

May no one live in fear; may all dwell in your presence.

Blessed are you, Great Shepherd,
who, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit,
gives us goodness and mercy,
leads us down right paths, and restores our souls. Amen.

[\[Let's say Psalm 23 together\]](#)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

[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 (978) 494-6953.]

Hymn: Shepherd of My Soul

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

Scripture Reading: John 10:1-10

[\[John 10:1-10 read for you\]](#)

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Reflection on the Scripture:

[\[The video of the reflection.\]](#)

When the people listening to Jesus that day didn't get the idea of the sheep not recognizing the Good Shepherd's voice, Jesus explained it another way. Jesus said *I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.* (John 10:9) And there's something buried in there that I would never have understood before the last seven weeks with Covid-19. The phrase "come in and go out" was well-known back then. It described a life that is absolutely safe. When you can go in and out without fear, then your country is at

peace, law and order reign and you are perfectly secure.¹ That is the description of the abundant life offered by the Good Shepherd.

We can't go in and out without fear right now. We have to stay away from our neighbors, from our own kids and grandkids. Our groceries are suspect. We have this whole rigamarole we have to put on to pump gas. We can't go to our favorite restaurants or to any restaurants. We don't dare get sick, because the last place we want to be right now is the emergency room, a place we always relied on before.

So does that mean Jesus isn't with us? I don't think so. Because they couldn't come in and go out back then, either. They were living in an occupied land. Taxes were through the roof. Infant mortality was high. Women died in childbirth all the time. The diseases which would tear through a community make Covid-19 look like nothing. Jesus' argument was that by following him, by believing in him, a kingdom could come into being where everyone, all the sheep in the sheepfold, could come in and go out. Those who lived by Jesus' ways would build a community where all were safe and secure.

It's not just a fantasy, a dream that will come at the end of times. We experience it now. Think about what happens when we recite Psalm 23. We recite Psalm 23 and we get less anxious. We are comforted. We are eased. I include it in our worship services often enough, I hope, that you have it memorized. If not, tape it up near your sink and wash your hands while reciting it. It will take more than 20 seconds, but you'll learn it by heart.

There is something in Psalm 23 that speaks to us.² Not because we are professional shepherds, but because we think we know what it is like to be sheep. We're constantly aware of what we're wanting. And it would be so nice if someone could just say "green pastures over here, still waters over there, follow me and you'll be all set." We're pretty clear about how miserable it feels to go through the darkest valley and we would so appreciate someone there with something to keep us on track (the staff) and something to beat off whatever wants to attack us (the rod). The rod and staff were both key tools for shepherds.

So when Jesus explains about the good shepherd, even with basically no knowledge of shepherding, we get it. We want to be shepherded well. Jesus wants to be sure people understand that the sheep know the voice of their shepherd.³ The sheep *need* to know the voice of their shepherd. Because there

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*. Vol. 1. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 59.

² Joseph S. Harvard, "Preaching the Easter Texts: Can I Get a Witness?." *Journal For Preachers* 37, no. 3 (2014), 7.

³ Karoline Lewis, *John: Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 139.

are all those thieves and bandits and strangers calling out to the sheep and distracting them, confusing them.

The thieves and the bandits call out to us and try to convince us that we don't have abundant lives. That we need more and they are the ones who can get it for us, for a price. We have pretty abundant lives even if we have to keep apart from those we love. The grocery stores are full of food, even if there are some bare shelves. The gas stations have plenty of fuel. The electricity and internet are still humming along.

Part of why we can't come in and go out is because we're taking care of the other sheep. We're trying so hard to not spread this virus around. We're trying so hard to keep the emergency rooms free for the people who have gotten caught when the virus *climbed in by another way* (John 10:1). But the thieves and bandits who want to lead us away from the Good Shepherd would really prefer we not notice that.

The dark shadow of the pandemic is helping us realize that even with all the things we can't do, we still have pretty good lives. We will get to the other side of this pandemic and we will come in and go out, but we need to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd. Take care of each other, love each other, see what you can do to help others feel the way you do when you recite Psalm 23. See what you can do to help others hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, even if it echoes through you. Because the voice of the Good Shepherd is still calling. It's just calling differently in the time of pandemic than it has before.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

[\[Let's pray together.\]](#)

O Shepherding God

You have prepared a table before us
and our cup overflows.

So we give generously from our common wealth,
as our way of praising you and giving to those in need.

You have anointed us and we are yours.

Bless these tithes and offerings

that they may become green pastures and still waters
for any and all who need your comfort and restoration. **Amen.**

Hymn: Good Shepherd of My Soul - Keith & Kristyn Getty

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

[[Let's pray together](#). Thanks, Carol, for being our Lay Leader this week!]

May the God who calls us by name
lead you out to green pastures
of grace in the neighborhoods that surround you
of laughter in the creativity that hides on the internet
of peace in the midst of a frightening new time.

May the God who calls us by name
Lead you out to the still waters
so you can safely rest
so you can find what you need
so you can simply be with your God.

May the God who calls us by name
Lead you to the house of the Lord
Where all are safe within
Where all are welcome
Where all are made whole.

May the God who calls us by name
lead you in to the safety of Christ's fold.
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."

[The Music Ministry crew made this bit of video for us, so we could all sing together, with each other and our former selves!]

Postlude: [The Good Shepherd by Fernando Ortega](#)

[No lyrics, just let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (5/3/20)

If you know those on this list, call on them & tell them we are praying for them. If you know others who should be added to this list please give their names to the minister or a deacon.

- Rev. Tom Atherton, failing from Parkinson's
- Friends & family of Nell Smallwood, Beatrice Maude Charewicz, Win Hall, Bruce Garvin, Louise Price, Eddy Whitcomb, Shirley Jeffreys, Hazel Corey, Jerry King, Tre Rouse, Tasha Feller, Pat Tiner and Terry House.
- Luca, Amy's nephew, as his new treatment appears to be having effect
- Those affected by the corona virus around the world and those working to limit its impact
- Those suffering from domestic violence, who are caught at home with their abusers at a time of rising stress, and therefore rising abuse, that they might find safe havens.
- For Peter Fleming, one of Lisa's friends from the Milford Special Needs group that meets monthly, who is in the hospital with a brain tumor.
- For Maggie, David Drake's mom, who's 93, in a nursing home and healing from Covid-19;
- For Nicu and the rest of the first medical reserve to be called up who are currently serving in New York City. May they be able to effectively do what they have trained for and return home safely.
- For the blue tape across the floor (even though it is keeping us from tripping over a cable);
- For a winter that is just getting to be too long;
- For the pain we're carrying that's coming ever closer to the surface, even as we try to be upbeat;
- For our kids finishing their school work, especially the college seniors who are facing a very uncertain future;
- For all those couples who are facing more togetherness than they ever bargained for;
- For the nurses and doctors who are working more than full time jobs and who are being asked to take pay cuts;
- For Robin, Amy's sister, who has a lot on her hands;
- For the insurance companies which are making a tough time even more challenging;
- For the days when work is like getting pecked to death by chickens;
- For help sleeping;
- For continually facing the unknown;

- For families struggling with each other and causing real damage in the process;
- For realizing how much social contact we really need;
- For the faith of the people, that we all might realize that staying connected to God and staying connected to what is more important in life will bring us the most joy;
- For those fearful of dying alone, fearful of being alone;
- For Rebecca and Steve, Lindsey & Joel's friends, who lost their son Corey to suicide;
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Generous God, thank you for the gift of this new day. Help me to watch for your signs and wonders in the world today, and fill my heart with gladness and generosity, that I may generate good will wherever I go. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Thank you, God, for shepherding me through this day. As I lie down to sleep this night help me to imagine green pastures and still waters, and to remember all the ways you have set a table before me and filled my cup to overflowing. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

Acts 2:42–47 describes what life was like in the early church. How do these words guide today's church?

Daily Awareness Reflection

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 the next few minutes 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 God for forgiveness for any failure or omission, and 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 ...

From Elizabeth Liebert's *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), p. 31.

Announcements:

Outreach Invitation to Send Thanks into the Community

As we practice social distancing and working from our homes, there are many people who are leaving their homes to do the jobs that help ensure our safety, health & well being. Some of these people are those who work in health care, our Brookline emergency services and local grocery stores.

Outreach is inviting the congregation to join us in writing appreciation and thank you notes to honor these people and let them know we are thinking of them. We are currently addressing Brookline's Fire, Police, Ambulance Departments and CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), along with St Joseph's Hospital, Southern NH Medical Center and our local grocery stores.

Instructions:

- Write one note or several - on cards, pieces of paper or any other creative idea you can think of
- You can write to a specific Brookline Dept, Hospital, Store (Market Basket or Shaws) or write a generally-addressed note that Outreach will send where needed
- Sign with your first name & Brookline Community Church
- Drop off in the box located at the side door of the church by May 8th. If that is not convenient please contact Amy at arazz3914@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Amy by email.

Thank you for your support to our community during this difficult time.

Help Lines

This time of isolation can be very difficult. You may know someone who needs some support beyond what you can provide. We're in this together.

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

Brookline Food Pantry

Although we cannot be together physically at this time, Outreach is continuing to work with Rebecca Purdin through the Brookline Welfare office & CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) to address any needs in our community.

The Brookline food pantry is now open on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10-2:00 for drop-offs only. There is a list on the [Brookline Food Pantry's Facebook page](#) that is being updated as items are needed. This week they're looking for:

1. Plastic Bins. We need about 20. They should be short (low sides around 2" to 4" tall) 10" to 12" x 18" to 24" (or in that range).

2. We need someone to swing by the Food Pantry on Tues or Thurs to pick up all the empty boxes and bring them to the transfer station to be recycled.

3. From the shopping list:

Egg Noodles
Tissues
Cat Litter

Cleaning Supplies
Olive Oil

4. For the Fridge and Freezer

Eggs
Ground Beef
Butter

Foil Wrap
Cranberry Juice

5. Since we only have so much fridge and freezer space, Gift Cards for Market Basket and Shaws are also helpful for us to purchase things as we need in the moment or to provide to clients.

If you know of anyone who could use some help from the Food Pantry, please let Rebecca or Amy know. We sense there's more need in the community than is currently picking up food.

Donations can be dropped off downstairs at the Town Hall during regular hours of operation. There are large boxes for donations if there is no one in the Food Pantry. There is also a drop off at the Brookline Post Office.

Thank you for your continued support to our church and our community.

Covid-19 Scams Targeting Seniors

The [NH Attorney General's office put out a press release](#) describing several scams that are targeting seniors. The claims range from needing personal information to get their Social Security payments, to being family members in need of cash to treat Covid-19 symptoms, to offers of fake medical products to prevent Covid-19, to needing personal information to get their stimulus checks, to fake charities. (Honestly, what are people like?!?).

Please pass the word to anyone who might be affected.

Covid-19 Information

Melanie, our state senator asked to pass along the following two pieces of information:

- If people want to know the latest status of Covid-19 in NH and the Emergency orders to date, go to <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/>
- A great video explaining Covid-19, what and how we fight it and why what we are doing is so important:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgBla7RepXU>