



*Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
May 31, 2020
Day of Pentecost*

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: [Oceans](#) by Dan Stevers

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

[Join Bill Dunbar, today's lay leader, [in our centering prayer](#).]

O God of Wind and Flame

Pentecost us,

let us learn to voice the Spirit,
shed the comfortable accents
of churchy insider talk,

let us learn to speak digital,
worship virtually

let us learn to fit our mouths to something strange,
speaking through a mask of love —

mostly verbs,
present tense, but not passive voice
and not so many "me" and "mine" —

let us learn to translate our worry,
like the worry of those who waited
in the Upper Room so long ago
and lead us to the active voice of love.

God, give us a Pentecost,
that communicates less
like the old pew liturgy
and Zooms with images of Spirit,
brief, surprising,
remembered
in our hearts and hopes. Amen.¹

Hymn: *Spirit of the Living God*

[[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.](#)]

O God of Wind and Flame
like a rushing wind your Spirit moved upon the first disciples
on the day of Pentecost,
and like a purifying fire your Spirit seared their hearts and minds
with the message of salvation.

Send your Spirit upon your church in this time and place,
stir up our courage, and rouse us for prophetic witness,
that we may join with them
to proclaim to the world your mighty deeds of power
in Jesus Christ.

¹ Today's centering and closing prayers were inspired in large part by Maren Tirabassi, "Some Pentecost 2020 Prayers," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted May 22, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/05/22/some-pentecost-2020-prayers/> (accessed May 25, 2020).

Join us as we proclaim the joys you have given us in this week:

That a 90' pine tree falling on an old shed can lead to new golf clubs;
That an Eddie Van Halen distortion pedal does exactly what it says it does;
That a Baltimore Oriole showed up at the feeder;
That a neighbor's son is safely arrived at his deployment in Afghanistan;
That Andrew came home from the hospital;
That a client made sure we knew our work was appreciated and valued;
That we were able to help a neighbor tidy up their lawn and have a visit on the porch at the same time;
That Becca received her diploma!

O God of Wind and Flame, come closer as we recite the concerns which have weighed us down in this week:

Helene, Carol's friend from work, who has an aggressive cancer on her liver;
The friends and family of Dennis, Donna's cousin, who passed away in his 90s;
For the people of Hong Kong, struggling to protect the political system they want;
For the campers of Camp Tevya who will not be gathering this summer;
For Polly, John Panto's sister, who's recovering from surgery to remove skin cancer lesions on her face;
For Donna's family as they seek the best path for dealing with her mom's dementia;
For the graduating college seniors who are facing a challenging path to the next phase of their life;
For Jane, that she might be well;
For the people of Brazil, struggling to bury their dead
For residents of assisted living and nursing homes who have been confined to their rooms and who are longing for company

Send your healing Spirit upon those who are sick in body or mind,
restore them to health,
and restore to them the joy of salvation.

Teach us to be good neighbors,
to live in peace with one another,
and in friendship share the joys and burdens of daily life.

Bless our children, protect them from danger,
and help parents and caregivers nurture them
so that they may mature in wisdom and grow in grace.

Bless our enemies
and show us how we may do good to them
for the sake of Jesus Christ.

In your mercy, God of Wind and Flame, receive our prayers
and, according to your wisdom,
provide all that we need;
through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Let us pray as your Son taught us:

[The Lord's Prayer]

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 (978) 494-6953.]

Hymn: *Broken Road* by Kathleen Duncklee

[[Click here](#) for a video that will let you sing with Rena's talented granddaughter. We used a piano version of this song on May 17th as our prelude and several folks asked to hear the words. How fortunate that we had a wonderful singer do a gorgeous version!]

I set out on a narrow way many years ago
Hoping I would find true love along the broken road
But I got lost a time or two
Wiped my brow and kept pushing through
I couldn't see how every sign pointed straight to you

That every long lost dream led me to where you are
Others who broke my heart, they were like Northern stars
Pointing me on my way into your loving arms
This much I know is true
That God blessed the broken road
That led me straight to you
Yes, He did

I think about the years I spent just passin' through
I'd like to have the time I lost and give it back to you

But you just smile and take my hand
You've been there, you understand
It's all part of a grander plan that is coming true

Every long lost dream led me to where you are
Others who broke my heart, they were like Northern stars
Pointing me on my way into your loving arms
This much I know is true
That God blessed the broken road
That led me straight to you
Yeah

And now I'm just a-rollin' home
Into my lover's arms
This much I know is true
That God blessed the broken road
That led me straight to you

That God blessed the broken road
That led me straight to you.

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-21

[[Acts 2:1-21 read for you](#)]

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Americans? And

how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Italians, South Africans, Brazilians, and residents of nursing homes, jails and prisons, Wuhan and Singapore, England and Wales, South Korea and the parts of the U.S. belonging to Native Americans, and visitors from Latin America, both documented and undocumented, Republicans and Democrats — in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'²

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

² This year I've chosen to update the reading from Acts with places scarred by Covid-19. The original text from Acts 2:5-13 reads: Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

I was talking with a friend from New York, who works in the back office of a Broadway theater. Her friends are all theater people, and she was talking about how, for a group of people whose lives are full of uncertainty, the pandemic has been terrifying. Because they thought they knew how to design their unpredictable lives into something livable. But they're really struggling. "And just when you've kind of pulled yourself together, another siren goes by," she said.

And I was saying how anxious we are when we see a New York or Connecticut license plate in an area that relies on tourism. Because we have so few ICU beds. It won't take much, just a couple of hot spots, a couple of people spreading the virus they don't know they have, and our community is reeling.

It was kind of a long conversation to not say very much. Because I can't imagine the life of a Broadway gypsy. And she can't imagine the life of a rural preacher in a community with only one tiny hospital and a lot of elderly people. We were speaking the same language. But it took us a long time to communicate. To get to the point where we shared the same idea, that we held the same thought in common. Specifically: we need to take care of each other. We need to look around us and make sure that those who are least able aren't bearing most of the burden.

We think of "communicating" as getting a string of text from one head to another. *Turn left at the next junction and go a mile and a half to the red barn. Bake at 350° for 12 minutes or until golden brown.* And me saying either of those in English when you speak Spanish isn't going work. So I need to speak your language. And anyone who's tried to assemble an Ikea bookshelf knows that directions that just use pictures aren't any clearer. So we react to the Pentecost story with a nod. Of course the Holy Spirit let them speak all the languages of the world. How else are they going to tell the story of Jesus Christ?

What we forget is that for the people at the original Pentecost described in Acts, they already spoke a common language, koine Greek.³ And they all also probably spoke Aramaic.⁴ So getting through to each other wasn't the challenge. The hard part was getting to common understanding.⁵ For that I need to speak your language. Getting your parent into assisted living means speaking a new language. Enrolling your kindergartener in school means speaking a new

³ G. H. C. Macgregor, "The Acts of the Apostles: Exegesis," vol. 9 in *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Bible in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1954), 37.

⁴ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 22.

⁵ Justo L. González, and Catherine Gunsalus González, "The Ins and Outs of Pentecost." *Journal for Preachers* 26, no. 4 (2003), 11.

language. Getting your car serviced means speaking a new language. You may all speak English, but until you have some common language, it's just really hard to know if you should agree to replace the starter motor.

What we also fail to see in the original Pentecost story is that the disciples couldn't wait to share the story of Jesus of Nazareth, of his life, death and resurrection, with a bunch of people who called them drunks.⁶ The Holy Spirit may give you gifts to share this transformative story about *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved* (Acts 2:21) and how awesome that is and how much better that makes your life. But you're still going to be sharing it with people who are hostile to you, who think you're nuts for believing it, let alone letting something like that change the way you live your life.⁷

Think about your faith for a minute. What about it makes your life easier? Does it give you more patience, more endurance, more resilience? Does it help you look for the blessing in the midst of a struggle? Does it give you comfort that there's a community that also gets something powerful out of something ancient? Do the rituals settle your heart?

Then think about someone you'll speak to in the next week and a question you can ask them. Where do you get the patience to explain to people that you get multiple deliveries of toilet paper a week? Why don't you just give up asking people about flossing when so few people do it? You said you've come to Lake Potanipo for 20 years. What about it is so relaxing for you?

Then listen for the common ground. Listen for what you both share. Listen for what the Holy Spirit is offering to you, so that you can experience your faith more fully. Because the more adept we become at listening to other people, the more languages we speak, the more likely we will be to speak compellingly of our own faith. The more successful we will be in offering other people the relief and peace and joy that our faith brings us.

Because even as we look for common ground, look for the common language that we speak, we are still only frail, fallible humans. The miracle of Pentecost is not that we can speak other people's language, not that we can share the promise of salvation. The miracle of Pentecost is that God is committed to using such frail and fallible vessels to break down the divisions imposed on us by the powerful systems which like the world the way it is. Even when we are rejected and called drunks, the miracle of Pentecost is that God is determined to use us to get back what belongs to the Kingdom of God.⁸ Acting through us, via the Holy

⁶ William H. Willimon, “‘Everyone whom the Lord Our God calls’: Acts 2 and the Miracle of Pentecost Preaching in a Multicultural Context.” *Journal for Preachers* 25, no. 4 (2002), 7.

⁷ Willimon, 7.

⁸ Willimon, 9.

Spirit, God is determined to save all of us. What miraculous common ground we all stand on, if we only knew it.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

O God of Wind and Flame,
we have opened our hands to you,
and our hands have been filled with good things.

Receive the gifts we bring in gratitude for your care for us,
and help us to bless you with dedication of our lives;
through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Hymn: *Let Your Living Water Flow*

[[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, Bill, for being our Lay Leader this week!]

O God of Wind and Flame,
on this Pentecost –
remind us of the fruit of the Spirit,
for we are trying to put forth
the buds of the church.

Lift us with the wings of the Spirit,
for we must rise above sorrow
on bent feathers and hope.

Confuse us
with how many languages
the Spirit speaks,
so we may listen to our neighbors.
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: *Living Waters* by Keith & Kristyn Getty

[Lyrics that you can sing with or ignore; either way let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (5/31/20)

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, 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 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, that they might find safe havens.
- 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 everyone to stay as healthy as they can in the days to come
- For the friends & families of those who have died alone;
- For our church, that we remain patient with the process of re-opening;
- Helene, Carol's friend from work, who has an aggressive cancer on her liver;
- The friends and family of Dennis, Donna's cousin, who passed away in his 90s;
- For the people of Hong Kong, struggling to protect the political system they want;
- For the campers of Camp Tevya who will not be gathering this summer;
- For Polly, John Panto's sister, who's recovering from surgery to remove skin cancer lesions on her face;
- For Donna's family as they seek the best path for dealing with her mom's dementia;
- For the graduating college seniors who are facing a challenging path to the next phase of their life;
- For Jane, that she might be well;
- For the people of Brazil, struggling to bury their dead
- For residents of assisted living and nursing homes who have been confined to their rooms and who are longing for company
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Spirit of God, source of life,
refresh my spirit,
reshape my desire,
and re-create my heart,
that I may show forth your enduring glory; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Spirit of God, you sustained me during the work of day; sustain me as I rest this night. Let my evening meditations be pleasing to you, that I may rise in the morning to rejoice in your goodness. Awake or asleep, I will sing your praise while I have being; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What prophetic word for the community has God given to you? In what ways do you struggle with conflicts between your way of life and the prophetic word God would have you proclaim to others? How are the acts of God manifest in your life and witness?

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 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 ...

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

Consider asking God for guidance on deepening our connection as a community when we have to stay apart. How do we change what we are doing now so that it is more satisfying? How do we change what we are doing now to better show our obedience to Jesus' commandment to love? How do we figure out the logistical tasks we need to attempt in person worship? How do we know when the list is good enough? How sustainable does the effort have to be? How do we counter the natural impulse to say, this is too hard to figure out?

Announcements:

Please shop smile.amazon.com and choose Brookline Community Church as your charity to support the church. Thanks!

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. In addition to Market Basket gift cards, this week, like last week, they're continuing to look for:

Dry cat food

Egg Noodles

Cat litter

Razors

Chips

Chili

Foil and Plastic Wrap

Soy Milk

Popcorn

Coconut Milk

Spaghetti

Tissues

Baby Formula (dry)

Perishables:

Chicken

Eggs

Ground Beef/Turkey

American and Cheddar Cheese

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:

- 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>