



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
July 5, 2020

Most 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.

Communion is a sacrament that we take together. So the on-line version of this service will just skip over the communion liturgy. If you'd like to participate in communion, please join us in the Zoom meeting. The link is in the email this worship service arrived in.

Prelude: [Oktober – 90 Second Song/Prelude #3 for Piano](#) by Clemens Christian Poetzsch [A piano piece to help you get settled for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

[Join Susan & Russell Haight, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

I've loved the parades of other years, O Lord,
with bicycles decorated,
and children banging coffee-can drums,
with cars decorated with streamers
carrying the oldest citizens,
with the well-rehearsed middle school band
the cub scouts and blue birds
daisy girls and a flatbed trailer
with some church choir holding on tight,

Lord, this year, there are no parades
no fireworks,
no bell ringing,
Because we need to be six feet apart.
And so we have to parade and “ooh” and “ahh”
in our memories from other years.

We will have other bands to clap for
other candy to catch
and politicians to wave to
in other years.

So for this year, help us,
O God whose love overcomes sin,
Help us
Celebrate our independence
from accepting old ways of not loving our neighbor
old ways of not loving the widow, and orphan and stranger among us.
Help us to love you as you asked.
So we can be independent of old sins
and gain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.¹

Hymn: *I'm Accepted, I'm Forgiven* by Divine Hymns

[[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.

¹ Today's centering and closing prayers started with a poem from 2019 by Maren Tirabassi, "The Eve of the Fourth of July" Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted July 3, 2019, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2019/07/03/the-eve-of-the-fourth-of-july/> (accessed June 25, 2020). I took it in a different direction for this Covid-19 year.

Invitation to the Table:²

Come to a table not defined by wood or stone
but by what rests upon it —
which is the “me” of Christ.

Come unto me because any burden is heavy
to the one who is under it.

Come unto me with the burden
of a crowded life or a lonely one.

Come unto me, with a child’s burden
of frustration or hunger,
of abuse or embarrassment.

Come unto me with a burden
of grief —
for the death of a beloved person
or a companion animal,
for an ability you have no longer,
or a relationship
needing reconciliation.

Come unto me with the burden
of a disappointment,
even one
that doesn’t seem significant enough,
or a fear deeper than words.

Come unto the “me” of Christ
with any burden —
for here is rest for the weary,
lightening of suffering,
gentleness,
and guidelines for becoming gentle.

Here is a yoke of responsibility
that can be lifted
because of a small piece of bread
and a sip of the cup of hope.

² Today’s communion liturgy was written by Maren Tirabassi , “Holy Communion Liturgy for July 5, 2020,” Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted June 26, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/06/26/holy-communion-liturgy-for-july-5-2020/> (accessed June 29, 2020).

Prayer of Consecration:

Leader: Jesus noticed that often people ignore both the celebration of those who are dancing with joy, and the sorrow of those who are weeping in pain or loss when those feelings are not their own. We come to this table rejoicing with those who laugh and sharing the tears of the grieving. We are God's children in wonder and loss, dispersed and gathered at the same time.

In your many kitchens, and living rooms, rest your hands lightly upon these elements which we set aside today to be a sacrament. We ask God's blessing on them and on us and on all those who are in our prayers this morning.

Leader: God of the open hand and the gentle yoke, we await your gift and your service. Send your Spirit of life and love,

All: of power and blessing upon your children in every "house of worship,"

Leader: so that this Bread may be broken and gathered in love and this Cup poured out to give hope to all.

All: Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you.

Leader: Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you. Amen.

Words of Remembering

Leader: We remember the Creator blessed all creatures and all human beings with plants of the ground and fruit of the trees. We remember that Rebekah's hospitality was proven because she remembered to give water not just to people but to camels, and that her compassion shone when she gave more than was asked or expected.

Communion is always more than expected, so we remember leftover baskets of bread and fish, so many parables everyone finds a heart-touching story, an invitation to children, tax collectors, and even thieves, hand-washed feet rather than a DIY basin, a holy pentecost translation-app, never the insistence we use special words.

We remember the Passover in Jerusalem
when Jesus expanded the menu to include himself,
a half-Communion at Emmaus of Bread broken,
so we still seek the Cup in the world,
a miracle breakfast on the beach
with fish that could feed a village,
and tables in houses that became church
when unconditional love was on the table.

Remembering is good but not enough.

Communion is most Holy not in the past,
but today and tomorrow. Jesus said,
“Do this now. Don’t talk. Eat and Drink.
Be blessed. Go forth.”

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: Let us at many tables receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

All: We come unto Christ in the Bread we share.

Leader: Let us in many places receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

All: We come unto Christ in the Cup we share.

Leader: The gifts of God for the people of God.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: Leader: In thanksgiving for this meal of grace and in the holy
dispersion of virtual worship, we claim the risen Christ’s love and
gentle yoke are found in all houses of worship. Let us pray ...

Leader: O Holy One, we have come unto you with our weariness

All: and we have let go of all in our lives that is heavy.

Leader: We thank you for the rest and strength of this communion

**All: so now we can lift up all that is light and gentle, humble and
easy,**

Leader: and learn from you how to change the world.

All: Amen.

Hymn: *Come to Me* by Dan Forrest

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

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

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

O God whose love overcomes sin
When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theatre
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

May we never again take for granted
the joys that fill our lives.
Let us lift them up to you in celebration,
and thank you for them:

For Clarence Farwell coming home to continue his recovery

For Grandkids coming to visit (and heading back to their parents afterwards!)

For Julian's high school graduation and going off to college,

For books that let us step into other lives and reflect on our own,

For curiosity to explore new roles we may not be perfectly suited to

We are so grateful that these joys are in our lives.

May we never take for granted
that you are with us in times of concern.
Let us lift up these concerns to you in acknowledgement
that you are with us even as we carry them.

We ask your presence for:

For Daniel, Yi-Fan's friend, who has been diagnosed with Covid-19

For Carol's mom, who worked as a caregiver for a woman who passed
away

For wisdom, as people combine personal fireworks with the dry woods
which surround Brookline

For understanding, as people struggle to move past the politics of mask
wearing,

For the ability to grow in our own self-awareness, so we can see ourselves
more accurately

We are so grateful that you are in our lives.

When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way--better
for each other
because of the worst.³

[\[The Lord's Prayer\]](#)

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.]

³ Based on a pray by Laura Kelley Fanucci, "Prayers during the Coronavirus Pandemic" Prayer Index of
the Jesuit Resources of Xavier University, [https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-
index/coronavirus-prayers](https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/coronavirus-prayers) (accessed June 25, 2020).

Scripture Reading: Romans 7:15-25a

[\[Romans 7:15-25a read for you\]](#)

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

When we start out as kids, sin involves cookies. Or smacking little brothers. There might possibly be something about mouthing off to Sunday School teachers in there. Or maybe that's just me. But we grow up and somehow our sins don't grow with us. Other people's sins, of course, they not only grow up – they flourish. They're easy to identify and point to and call out, even if we're not calling them out to their faces. But our own sins? They stay in the cookie jar.

And then we hear the reading from Romans, *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate* (Romans 7:15). And we all recognize that moment. We all have a list of doing things we know we shouldn't do and we do anyways. Or a list of things we don't do but we know we should do. And none of us are surprised that those lists exist. So, we just nod and give a big "amen" to Brother Paul.

But somehow that lack of surprise, that expectation that we're going to do stuff that we don't really mean to do, doesn't connect to the concept of sin, perhaps because our concept of sin is stuck at the Nutter Butter level.

Look at what Paul is arguing. Paul was a Pharisee, someone who felt salvation for individuals and for the state of Israel was going to come by scrupulous obedience to the Law. Not the rules and regulations of the Roman emperor, but the Law that God have given the Jews. Paul wasn't ashamed of that belief, he was proud of it, saying that there had been no one better than him at following it (Philippians 3:5-6). This gift of God, this way for human beings to live together and smooth the path for the arrival of the kingdom, was something good in Paul's life. And yet, in following it, it had led him to persecute the body of Christ. This unalloyed good and holy thing in Paul's life had led Paul to the greatest sin he

could imagine committing.⁴ Not because the Law was defective, but because sin has the power to twist the good gifts of God, even the Law, to evil ends.⁵ And sin lives in us. There's no way to understand Paul's argument if we insist on keeping our understanding of sin limited to "Only eat cookies with permission."

When you see me coming out of Hannaford's these days, I'm flushed and longing to wipe my sweaty face on my t-shirt. My reading glasses are still perched on my nose, usually not steamed up because they're in front of the top edge of my mask. And the mask itself has a perfect circle of sweat spreading from the tip of my nose. I will keep that wretched mask on until I am in my car. Not because I love my neighbors. Not because I want to keep them safe. But because I refuse to be one of those people who isn't wearing a mask. I have absolutely turned wearing a mask into something political. That wasn't the case when I put the mask in the car or when I put it on before going into the grocery. I have taken something that is a good gift, that peril of the Covid-19 pandemic can be reduced by people wearing masks, and turned it into something evil, a way of separating me from "them," whomever "they" are. That is sin, and it rises out of me, without my intention, because of pride and anger and stubbornness. And because wearing a mask is something I can do to help limit the transmission of this disease. Sin gets tangled up in good ethical actions.

Be clear about what Paul is arguing. Human knowledge is inadequate. Knowing what the right thing to do isn't enough. Human resolution is inadequate. Deciding to do the right thing isn't enough. Human diagnosis is inadequate. Knowing what goes wrong isn't enough.⁶ Even at the top of our game, even when we drawing on the best of our abilities, we are going to fail. That's how powerful sin is in this world. We can pretend that's not the case, but we aren't fooling anyone. *Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?* (Romans 7:24). And how depressing is that? We are going to fail and then we're going to die? Why even bother?

It's not the human failure Paul is pointing out in this passage, where we so want to say "amen, Brother Paul." If we just needed to shore up our resolution and improve our will power, Christ would be reduced to some kind of fabulous life coach.⁷ There is a gap between our human abilities and God's call. It's a gap we can never close. But God can. Christ can. Christ has. That's the good news, the gospel that Paul is preaching. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you

⁴ Ted A. Smith, "Proper 9, Theological Perspective, Romans 7:15-25a" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A, Volume 3*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 208.

⁵ Smith, 210.

⁶ Barclay, 100.

⁷ Smith, 210.

rest.” The burdens don’t get less heavy. We don’t get more efficient at carrying heavy burdens. We accept the deliverance that Christ offers.

When we put down our inadequate Nutter Butter concept of sin and accept that it is a truly powerful force that we are not capable of defeating in all cases, then we can also truly accept Christ’s deliverance from that sin. We’re never going to muscle our way through this world, relying only on ourselves and our own ability to stick with the straight and narrow. Because sin is strong enough to turn even the Law that God gave us into a way of doing evil in this world. The longer we think of sin as the answer to a decision tree of right and wrong, the longer we are going to be crying *Wretched one that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?* (Romans 7:24). Because the answer is right there, waiting for us when we finally put down the fantasy that we can manage a path around sin the way we manage a path around a 3:00pm Nutter Butter when we’re just bored. *Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (Romans 7:25).

Hymn: Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me by Selah

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with. “Selah” is a word which appears only in the psalms. Because it appears only there and nowhere else, we’re not sure how to translate it. It may be a stage direction or a kind of “Amen” or a suggestion that we hold silence for a bit. It’s a great name for a musical group!]

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We’ve Been Given

[\[Let’s pray together.\]](#)

O God whose love overcomes sin
you have laced our lives with blessing.
As we present these offerings, we also tender our lives.
Make us your bold and faithful people,
willing to go forward in faith wherever you would lead us,
that we might be a comfort in the world.
We pray in the name of Jesus,
by the gift of your empowering Spirit. Amen.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

[\[Let’s pray together\]](#). Thanks, Susan & Russell, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

O God whose love overcomes sin
We go out into the world
Not in a parade, or even
In a sparkle of fireworks
Or with the ringing of a bell.

We go out into the world
A bit of a hot mess,
Constantly doing what we don't mean
And unable to get it together to do what we meant to do.

And we go out into the world
Six feet apart and wearing a mask
While trying to keep our hearts in touch.

And we go out into the world knowing that
God's love
has overcome,
is overcoming,
will overcome
all the mistakes we make,
and bring us home
to freedom
to independence
to liberty
from the sin that plagues our steps.
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: [Confidence](#) by Sanctus Real

[Feel free to sing along and let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (7/5/20)

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, 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;
- For Daniel, Yi-Fan's friend, who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- For Carol's mom, who worked as a caregiver for a woman who passed away
- For wisdom, as people combine personal fireworks with the dry woods which surround Brookline
- For understanding, as people struggle to move past the politics of mask wearing,
- For the ability to grow in our own self-awareness, so we can see ourselves more accurately
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Loving God, I receive this new day as a gift from you. Help me to see signs today of your compassion, which is over all that you have made. Please keep me mindful to watch for ways today in which I can ease others' burdens and give them rest, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Caring God, thank you for my journey through this day. Whatever conflict I may feel within about what I did and did not do I give to you to carry for me now, and I let you give me rest. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

How have you experienced God's steadfast love (Ps. 145:8)?

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 ...

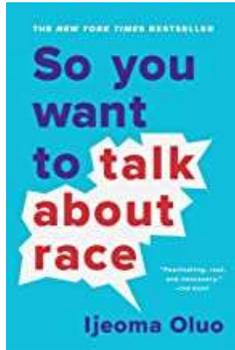
From Elizabeth Liebert's *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), p. 31.

Announcements:

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

The church's financial obligations continue. If you are able, please mail your offering to: Brookline Community Church, PO Box 507, Brookline, NH 03033.

Book Group at the Congregational Church of Hollis



The nation is grappling with issues of race and racism in profound ways that are asking white people, especially, to become more genuinely curious and educated about the lived experience of people of color. In the month of July, Rev. Tanya will be facilitating a book group exploring the best-selling book by Ijeoma Oluo called, *So You Want to Talk About Race*.

According to a review in the Washington Independent Review of Books, "white readers open to educating themselves will come away from *So You Want to Talk About Race* with a fairly nuanced understand of race relations and of the traumas enacted, in particular, on black bodies through the systematic inequalities present in American society."

We'll meet on Zoom, Wednesday evenings from 7-8 p.m. starting on July 1. Please purchase a copy of the book from your favorite bookseller, and participate in what promises to be an engaging and thought-provoking conversation! Please email Rev. Tanya (pastor@hollischurch.org) to get the Zoom call details.

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

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

- 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/>

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:

--Perishables-- (must be dropped off during staffed hours or arrange pick up):

Eggs

Chicken

Ground Beef

American Cheese

Chicken Nuggets

--Non-Perishables--

Pickles

Parmesan Cheese

Cookie Mix/Cookies

Salsa

White or Cider Vinegar

Flushable Wipes/Baby Wipes

Cleaning Products

Cat Litter

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.