



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
July 19, 2020

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: [Doxology](#) by Page CXVI

[You'll know the first verse, and then you might find some new words for when you need a blessing and to settle for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

[Join Jill & Kevin Aitken, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

God, who meets us on every road of life,
the road to Bethlehem
where all children are born,
the road to Damascus
when we turn our lives around
the road to Emmaus as you explain
what is really true in life,

Stay beside those who grieve,
those who are wounded,
the ones who treat them
or wait beside them,
those who are so shaken
they wonder when they will sleep,
and those everywhere who wonder
if there will be weeping
in their town,
and, on their highway, miles of fear.

Bring us tonight to a gentle parking
of all our terrors,
and help us put a brake
on tragedies all around us. Amen.¹

Hymn: *His Mercy is More* by Matt Papa

[[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.](#)]

God, who meets us on every road of life,
continue to be gracious with us
as we travel the road you have given us.

Continue to be gracious with us,
As new phases of our lives are born,
Like your shining child in Bethlehem.

¹ Today's centering prayer started with a poem from 2019 by Maren Tirabassi, "Prayer for Odessa and Midland, Texas" Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted August 31, 2019, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2019/08/31/prayer-for-odessa-and-midland-texas/> (accessed July 13, 2020).

Continue to be gracious with us,
As we celebrate like shepherds on a winter's night,
Singing with joy, singing for joy, singing
For the safe arrival of the baby the church gathered items for back in April
For Stacey and her family making a road trip up north to meet baby
Wesley before returned to Florida to start school (and getting to stay in a
yurt in Virginia!)
For the many birthdays in the Levesque/Perkins households coming up
For John Panto's daughter's birthday and the socially distanced party the
family will be throwing

Continue to be gracious with us,
O God who meets us on every road of life.

Continue to be gracious with us,
As we hit concerns that stop us in our tracks,
That turn us around and around,
Like on that road to Damascus,
Be with us when we are blinded by our concerns
For Clarence Farwell continuing to recover at home.
For Elly Austin back in the hospital with pneumonia
For Friends and Family of Wayne, Tony Tiner's uncle, who passed away
unexpectedly
For the sailors about the *Bonhomme Richard* which caught fire this week in
San Diego
For finding the words we need to express our experience of faith
For Peter's replacement making it to the job site safely so Peter can come
home
For our country and our people that we can work together to solve our
problems

Continue to be gracious with us,
O God who meets us on every road of life.

Continue to be gracious with us,
O God who has planted the fields on the sides of the roads,
that we may ripen into the children of God's realm
and live with you forever, shining like the sun
brought safe to the end of our journeys
in your heavenly home. **Amen.**

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

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: *I Will Praise Him, Still* by Fernando Ortega

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

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:24-30

[\[Matthew 13:24-30 read for you\]](#)

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

When you train to be a minister, you go to a lot of worship services in school. I suppose it's like going to culinary school and having to try a lot of your fellow students' cooking. Some of the services were really beautiful, really moving. Some you could see what they were going for, and it was cool, but the execution left something to be desired. And some... some were train wrecks. It would have been less messy and more interesting if they had just made vinegar and baking soda volcanoes, like everyone does the night before the fifth grade science fair.

There was one service I went to, where they spent a fair amount of time, 30 minutes maybe, getting you to write about something that held you back from God. They asked really good questions, sort of leading you on an interesting journey of reflection. It wasn't easy, but it was meaningful. There were prayers and music, candles, some scripture, although not today's reading about the wheat and the weeds.

So after that big an investment in time and energy, as the worship service was winding up, they asked us to crumple up the paper we had done all this writing on, and put it in a basket. I hope it didn't show on my face, but I was repelled by the idea. Just viscerally. I wanted to support my colleagues in whatever they were doing, but I had put so much of myself into my reflection. I would never have written what I wrote if I thought there was the remotest chance that someone else might see even a few of the words, let alone have that paper out of my custody. There was no way I was crumpling it up, let alone handing it over to someone else. I panicked for a moment and then God whispered in my head, the way God does sometimes. Clear as anything God said, "LIE". So I crumpled up my grocery list and put it in the basket.

With this basket of reflections of what was keeping us from God (and my grocery list), they said they were sending one member of the group outside to burn the papers, to free us from what was keeping us back from God.

And that is when the wheels fell off. I don't remember precisely what happened next. I think they had some kind of benediction, that included a blessing over the crumpled up paper. But before we even got to the point where we could give feedback on the worship service or whatever, people were on their feet, agitated and angry. They wanted their paper back, they didn't want anyone else to see it and how dare our colleagues presume that they could ask such questions and then treat them so lightly, treat them as if 30 minutes of writing and a match could change something in our relationship with God. I do remember that the professor had to get involved. It was epic.

And it was true. In gathering the weeds you do uproot the wheat along with them (Matthew 13:29). So much of this parable from Matthew is about clear divisions.² There is wheat and there are weeds. There is good seed and bad. There is the land owner and the enemy. There is the wheat harvested in the barn and the weeds bundled up for burning. We want to be the wheat, the good seed, the wise land owner, the barn full of harvest. And in this time of division, we want it to be clear how all of Those People (whoever those people are) are the weeds, the bad seeds, the enemy, the bundles ready for burning. And if it's going to be clear, let's have it be clear now, let's be like the slaves of the household (Matthew 13:27), and get out there and pull the weeds now and get the bundles burning.

And yet in this parable, Jesus is telling his followers to wait. Judgment is coming. Judgment will happen. But it is not up to us to do the judging. The good and the bad seed are too tightly entwined. Jesus is reassuring his followers that even

² Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 147.

though much of the rest of the world is opposed to or ignoring his teaching, the disciples need to keep doing the work for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

So why doesn't he just say that? Why not just lay it out plain and simple? Jesus doesn't talk about what the Kingdom of God will look like when it's finally here in its full and complete state. Jesus wants to talk about how the Kingdom is coming into being now, here, in the middle of this world where the weeds win out much of the time,³ where evil people sow bad seeds at night for no other reason than to mess with good people trying to do the right thing.⁴ Jesus wants to share the secrets of the kingdom, but they can't be taught, they can only be revealed.⁵ There's no data, no analytical work, no if/then/else statement that's going to help us understand how the kingdom work.

So Jesus tells us a story about wheat and weeds. And hopefully, we hear that story and we begin to ask ourselves some questions.⁶

- What are the weeds in our life teaching us, that we cannot learn any other way?
- What are the weeds in our life protecting us from seeing?
- Have we ever had the experience of learning that someone else saw us as the weeds in their wheat field? How did we respond, and what did we learn?
- Have we ever had the experience of discovering that the wheat we thought we were growing really amounted to nothing but weeds?
- When have we, as a people and a church, looked back on our history and seen that the wheat we thought we were harvesting was filled with more weeds than any of us were willing to admit at the time?
- Do you think it might be possible that this is happening again today? Where are we, as a church, in danger of mistaking our weeds for wheat?

Those questions take time to answer. Answer too quickly and we bundle up and burn the good stuff we need to live on. Make a judgment too hastily and something really important is lost. Be so impatient to get to the end that we make the wrong decision, and we'll miss the lesson. Our good harvest relies on God. When we let God make the call, we can keep growing, we can keep learning until the end. When we let God make the decision, the wheat and the weeds end up in the right place. And the kingdom comes a little nearer, because we acknowledge our utter reliance on God.

³ Talitha J. Arnold, "Proper 11, Pastoral Perspective, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43" 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), 260.

⁴ Mark L. Bailey, "The Kingdom in the Parables of Matthew 13 Part 3: The Parable of the Tares." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, no. 619 (1998): 270.

⁵ Hare, 149.

⁶ Anna Carter Florence, "Seventh Sunday after Pentecost," in *Preaching Year A with Anna Carter Florence: Reflections on the Gospel Readings (2016-2017) Revised Common Lectionary*. (St. Paul, MN: Luther Seminary, 2016), 94.

My colleagues in seminary thought they were supposed to be the ones who decided what got tossed into the holy fire. Jesus was trying to reassure us that the kingdom is indeed coming and that we have a role in its arrival. But it will be God that decides what gets burned up and what remains. Often, in the space created by such patience, it is not just others, but we ourselves, which are welcomed into a larger reality.⁷ So let us grow in that larger reality, wheat and weeds together.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

O God who meets us on every road of life,
you have met us and blessed us with
such abundant promise.
In gratitude we offer what we carry in our hearts
and our pockets.
As we bring these worn and freighted offerings,
we pray that you would use us,
for we come in the name of Jesus
and by the movement of your Spirit in this place. Amen.

Anthem: Reason by Unspoken

[\[Click here\]](#) 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, Jill & Kevin, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

God, who meets us on every road of life,
as we head back out into the world,
We ask that this week,
something new be born in us,
as we walk the road to Bethlehem
where all children are born.

We ask that this week,
something turns around in us,
as we walk the road to Damascus
when we turn our lives around.

⁷ Theodore J. Wardlaw, "Proper 11, Homiletical Perspective, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43" 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), 263.

We ask that this week,
something opens up in us,
as we walk the road to Emmaus as you explain
what is really true in life,

Help us to help others harvest
the bounty in their lives,
even those who grieve,
even those who are wounded,
even those who are so shaken,
they wonder if they will sleep.

Help us to be the ones who treat
the grieving, the wounded, the shaken,
Help us stay beside them,
Help us to wait with them,
Help us bring them to a safe parking spot,
Near the abundant fields you have planted. 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: [Is He Worthy?](#) by Chris Tomlin

[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 (7/19/20)

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 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;
- Clarence Farwell continuing to recover at home.
- Elly Austin back in the hospital with pneumonia
- Friends and Family of Wayne, Tony Tiner's uncle, who passed away unexpectedly
- For the sailors about the *Bonhomme Richard* which caught fire this week in San Diego
- For finding the words we need to express our experience of faith
- Peter's replacement making it to the job site safely so Peter can come home
- For our country and our people that we can work together to solve our problems
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Holy One, I awake into a sense of your presence with me. From time to time today, remind me that each day is a journey into the unknown but that there is nowhere I can go where you are not with me. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Thank you, God, for the gift of this day. You have been my comfort and help, my strength and my shield. As I drift into sleep, I praise your name and rest in the knowledge that you are always with me. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What does it mean to wait with patience for the coming reign of God?

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.

| | Actual Income | Actual Expenses | Income vs. Expenses +/- |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| June | \$33,147 | \$43,010 | (\$9,863) |

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!

Every week on Wed:

- Jul 15, 2020 07:00 PM (Introduction through Chapter 5)
- Jul 22, 2020 07:00 PM (Chapters 6-11)
- Jul 29, 2020 07:00 PM (Chapters 12-17)

Join Zoom Meeting

- <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81864626885?pwd=ZVlsWW8vMHNCcm1uYTQ5WGJBUm14Zz09>
- Dial-in 1 646 558 8656
- Meeting ID: 818 6462 6885
- Password: 141531

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 they're continuing to look for:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Brownie Mix | Dry Cat Food |
| Juice Boxes/Pouches | Ground Beef |
| Pickles | Margarine |
| Tissues | |

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.