



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
July 26, 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: [Prelude to Worship](#) by Caren Goodin Evarts

[No lyrics are posted, but feel free to sing along if that helps you get settled for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

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

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.¹

Hymn: *Abide with Me* by Indelible Grace

[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with. The words will be familiar but the new (to me anyway) tune let me hear them again for the first time.]

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 of Inseparable Love,
You have given your world the gift of Jesus
to transform our suffering into healing and hope.
Be with all who suffer hardship, distress, or concern
 For the Friends & Family of Ron Dean, a long-time member of this church,
 who passed away in Oregon

 For those of us who are mentally and spiritually weary and need some
 stillness

Help us to honor you by serving together,
as we grow in the mercy and compassion of Christ.

¹ Lynne Ungar, "Pandemic" Prayers during the Coronavirus Pandemic, Jesuit Resources from Xavier University, posted March 11, 2020, <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/coronavirus-prayers> (accessed July 17, 2020).

You blessed us with the gift of creation
and call us to uphold its purpose of declaring your holy splendor.
Awaken us to the joys surrounding us, the joys

For Nancy & Bill's daughter having her appendix out successfully (if
unexpectedly!)

For close-to-home trips that changed the channel in our heads, to Lincoln,
NH, to the Milford Farmer's Market (and the Averill House Winery booth!),
to Mt. Chocorua, to Fairhaven, MA

For doing our patriotic duty on National Ice Cream Day

For family birthdays, from Cindy Perkins to Linda & Bob's granddaughter
turning 13

For 9,000 lines of code compiling correctly after hours of work

Join us with the Spirit's movement in caring for your world
as together we await our redemption from glory into glory.

We give thanks for the gift of hope that never ends
and that we are more than victors through him who loved us.

We remember all who have died
and give thanks that nothing can separate us from you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 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: *Nothing Shall Separate Us* by Divine Hymns

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

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:26-39

[\[Romans 8:26-39 read for you\]](#)

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as
we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God,
who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit
intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are
called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also

predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God. And if we were still meeting face to face, I might have set you up in groups and asked you to make your own lists. And we would have come up with some good ones. Not racing traffic on Route 3, nor sticky masks, nor cancelled bell ringing, nor cooking three meals a day (and don't get used to it!), nor abundant zucchini, nor people who can't figure out how to go the correct direction in Market Basket, nothing will separate us from the love of God.

Except that the petty annoyances aren't what worry us about being separated from the love of God. When we are worried about that separation, we are sitting in a dark place. That our drinking or our temper or our sharp tongue will leave us alone in this world, rejected by everyone, including God. That our need for love will have pushed everyone away from us including God. That our compulsion to name the racism and sexism we see around us every day will push everyone away, including God. That our destruction of the environment will leave God no sacred place to stand when God comes to this world. Because we have lost someone we loved, and our love for them was what always helped us find a path to God's love. When we are worried about being separated from God's love, it's

the fears we are barely willing to acknowledge to ourselves, let alone show in a small group and laugh about.

When we are worried about being separated from God's love, we look at our struggles to re-open schools in the fall, helpless because the kids who are falling behind the most are the ones who were the furthest behind to begin with. We look at who are essential workers, and most of them are barely making minimum wage. And the ones making way more than minimum wage are people like doctors and nurses and their getting beyond exhaustion because we're acting as if they are machines, not human beings, who can work shift after shift after shift in the ICU without an end in sight. We know that the restaurants and hospitality and airline industries are all getting crushed, but there's just no way to take the vacation we were planning and even if we could get past the worry about the virus, there's the money we're not sure we can spend. But as Christians, aren't we supposed to be doing more than praying about all those things? Doesn't that separate us from the love of God?

In March of 2000, I realized that if I didn't find a way of getting exercise that worked for me, that made me happy, I was in trouble. But gyms with their beautiful people in spandex, their boastful people slamming weights around, their personal trainers giving me either powder puff workouts because they were afraid I'd have a heart attack right then, or workouts so tough I could never complete them, gyms were places of shame and dread and self-loathing. So I asked everyone, and I mean everyone, for advice. Dental hygienist, grocery store bagger, my friends, my parents' friends, librarians, people in line at the bank. Someone referred me to Paul's gym and I loved it in a way I had never loved any exercise program before. I've been going faithfully for 20 years. I've become a born-again athlete. And if you think born-again Christians can be annoying ...

But for years, I would drive to Paul's gym and I would sit in the parking lot and I would decide whether I was going in or not. I had packed my workout clothes, I had built it into my schedule, I had paid for it, *I had driven to the gym – I was in the actual parking lot* and still I was spending mental, emotional, spiritual energy on deciding whether to go in. I love that gym. Honestly, it's my model for a healthy church. Never once had I gotten there and not gone in. And still I spent some of my life force multiple times a week deciding whether to go in or not.

Until the day when I just snapped. I wasn't going to decide any more. I was going to go in. Maybe I wouldn't even warm up. Maybe I wouldn't even change out of my street clothes. But this dithering while sitting in the car was over. I wasn't going to decide anymore. I was just going in.

For Paul, the Bible guy, not the gym guy, I think there is a moment like that, when he decides to follow Jesus. Nothing changes. He still has to deal with all the

challenges of life, all the sin, all the obligations under God's Law,² all the taxes and requirements under Roman law. He still needs to buy bread and cheese in the market. Nothing changes.

But everything changes. Because he can let go of so much doubt and worry. Living in this world is messy and hard and there are entire sectors of society dedicated to making it that way, the ones who bring the *hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword* (Romans 8:35). Paul quotes Psalm 44 *For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered* (Romans 8:36). And we follow Jesus Christ whose death underlined how messy and hard and horrible this world is.

For Paul, the decision to follow Jesus, means leaving all the grinding doubt behind. We are no longer alone in this struggle; it's no longer up to us on our own. *The Spirit helps us in our weakness* (Romans 8:26); *that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words* (8:26); *the Spirit intercedes* (8:27); *If God is for us, who is against us?* (8:31) *Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies* (8:33).

Once Paul makes that decision to follow Jesus, the noise in his head drops significantly. Life is just as messy and hard and horrible, but it touches him less, it immobilizes him less. When you look at the list of things which cannot separate us from the love of God, they're all huge things, things well beyond any one person's control:³ *death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation* (Romans 8:38-39). If nothing that big can separate us from God's love, how can our doubts, our concerns separate us? They can't.

It's so easy to see what we take on when we follow Jesus. And it's a lot. We aren't allowed to not see the injustice of the world anymore. We are obligated to care for the widows and orphans and strangers among us, because we were once slaves in Egypt (Deuteronomy 24:17-18). We take on Jesus' suffering and death. But we are also given relief from the hard, horrible mess of this world. When nothing can separate you from the love of God, you gain a freedom that nothing, not one thing can reduce. In committing more fully to the reality that nothing can separate you from God, you may find that your earthly reality is far easier to navigate and to change.

Anthem: *He is With Us* by Love & the Outcome

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

² Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), 308-309.

³ Beverly Gaventa, "Proper 12: Romans 8:26-39" in *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV – Year A*, ed. Walter Brueggemann et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 422.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

O God of Inseparable love
We dedicate our lives to you this day
and seal that promise by way of this offering.
We give out of the abundance of our hearts,
that the treasure of your kingdom may be
shared with many.
Thank you for giving us grateful hearts
and a spirit of generosity for the flourishing
of your realm. Amen.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

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

O God of Inseparable Love,
as we head back out into the world,
We ask that this week,
We stop staring at all the things that have ceased,
So we can focus on all those
We touch with our hearts.

We ask that this week,
We see connections we've missed before,
We realize how many hands hold our lives together
We see the terror and beauty of dependency
We've always skipped over.

We ask that we become still,
So our compassion will move out ahead of us,
So our love will get there first,
So without racing around,
We show the truth we know:
That nothing will separate us from your love. 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: [All The People Said Amen](#) by Matt Maher

[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 (7/26/20)

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 has entered palliative care at the end of his long journey with Parkinson's. Please pray for an easy passage.
- Friends & family of Nell Smallwood, Beatrice Maude Charewicz, 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;
- For Nicu and the rest of the first medical reserve who have returned home safely from New York City;
- For the Friends & Family of Ron Dean, a long-time member of this church, who passed away in Oregon
- For those of us who are mentally and spiritually weary and need some stillness
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

I awake this day eager to receive divine instruction and to enact your word. As the day unfolds, may I step more deeply into your heavenly realm through loving you and serving your world. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Your Word is wonderful, O God! It has ordered my day and guided my path to you. As I sleep this night, make your face to shine upon me so that I may awaken as a mirror of your likeness as I journey from darkness into light. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

When God asks Solomon to make a wish, Solomon does not ask for longevity or wealth, but for the wisdom to discern what is right. What is the one wish that you would ask of God? What does God's response to Solomon reveal about the desires of our hearts and what is ultimate and lasting in God's eyes?

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.

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:

Hot Dogs	Juice (Apple, Cranberry, other fruits)
Cheddar Cheese	Coffee
Eggs	Flushable Wipes
Olive Oil	Foil Wrap
Cookies	Trash Bags
Pudding (cups or mix)	Sandwich and Freezer Bags
Cereal	Bleach
Pancake Syrup	Dry Cat Food
	Fresh Fruit -- Apples and Oranges

Also, a big thank you to mask makers who donated masks to the food pantry already. They have been a huge help for people. If anyone has more to donate, we are running low. We still have several kid masks, but could use more for adults.

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.