



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
August 9, 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: [How Great the Wisdom and the Love](#) by Paul Cardall

[An instrumental piece to help you get settled for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

[Join Anne Desrochers & John Panto, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#), which is based on Psalm 85:8-13.]

Leader: God speaks peace to the faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts.

All: Surely salvation is at hand for those who fear God.

Leader: Where God dwells, steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

All: Faithfulness springs up from the ground and righteousness looks down from the sky.

Leader: God gives what is good and we respond with abundant praise!

Hymn: *I am the Bread of Life* by Suzanne Toolan

[[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.

Invitation to the Table:¹

Christ's invitation is simple —
sit down where you are.

You don't need to run off somewhere else —
not a nearby village market or a familiar sanctuary,
communion is where you are — sit down.

The disciples complained —
it is a deserted place and the hour is late.
Jesus said, "They need not go away."

No one needs to go away.
No one is deserted and no one is late —
not you who are alone,
because you are vulnerable to virus
or you who would feel alone
even in a not-distancing crowd
because something
has made your life a wilderness.

Jesus has compassion on every crowd,
healing them, even the hungers,
one by one by one.

Here is green grass,
someone to help you sit down,
someone to help you stand up again,
someone to bless Communion,
so it will be enough,
and break it into pieces you can handle.

Sit down where you are.

¹ Today's communion liturgy was written by Maren Tirabassi , "Holy Communion Liturgy for August 2, 2020," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted July 24, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/07/24/holy-communion-liturgy-for-august-2-2020/> (accessed July 29, 2020).

Prayer of Consecration:

Leader: In the story about feeding a multitude, Jesus asked that people bring to him what they had. You have done that today. 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 to make them enough and also to make them abundant for us and for all those who are in our prayers this morning.

Leader: God of compassion, you bless and break everything we are and everything we bring to you.

All: Our deep scarcity becomes enough to sustain us,

Leader: and then our "enough" becomes an abundance we could never imagine. We pray that your Spirit of life and love, of tenderness and power, rest upon every bread and every cup,

All: that they may feed the inmost need of each child of God

Leader: and pour forth a grace that can change the world. Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you.

All: Amen.

Words of Remembering

Leader: We remember the Creator
fed the aurora borealis and ocean depths,
pterodactyls and diatoms,
all we see now that grows and breathes,
all that swims, swarms, slithers,
all that runs, flies, leaps and loves.

We remember Jesus Christ
played vintner at a wedding feast,
rubbed elbows with Zacchaeus' friends,
taught the disciples they should not substitute
anything like stone or snake
for really important menus
like reduced lunch, 68 hours, soup kitchen
food pantry or meals on wheels,

and, in the midst of profound grief
for cousin John's death,
expanded the disciples' understanding
of the hope recipe in
bread crust and fish scraps,
and then, when they forgot ... did it again.

We always remember a Passover in Jerusalem
when Jesus borrowed an upper room,
soaked and scrubbed the tired feet of others,
and explained that there is
a God-shaped hole in everyone's belly
and Jesus would fill it with love.

Remembering is beautiful,
but there is not much taste in it.
Let us stop running to nearby villages
with our hunger and thirst,
and sit down here and now,
to eat and drink, be blessed and broken.

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: The bread on your table is blessed and broken like the picnic of grace.

All: Sharing love, we will never be hungry.

Leader: The cup on your table is blessed and shared like the overflowing of
tears and joy

All: Drinking deeply, we will never thirst.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: In thanksgiving for the meal that heals yesterday and the unexpected
grace that empowers tomorrow, we pray for the wisdom to give away
as fast as possible some twelve baskets of leftovers ...

Leader: O Holy One, as we received this sacrament in the holy dispersion of
virtual worship, we thought we "ordered" from a select gourmet menu,
and never expected to become the curbside pickup of your love and
justice,

All: of your compassion and courage,

Leader: of your hope and healing

All: for all of your children who need a meal in a deserted place.

Leader: Help us gather the leftovers from the miracles in our lives and give
them away.

All: Amen.

Hymn: *Eightfold Amen* by Discover Worship

[[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.](#)]

Compassionate God,
your word is very near,
on our lips and in our hearts.
As this word is read and proclaimed,
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
make it become in us the word of faith.

Then send us to bring this word to others
Whose lives are lifted up with joy,
Whom we can join in prayer,

For getting older and more confident about how to handle the hurdles that
are coming at us;

For Stacey's safe visit and healthy return home so she could meet her
(not-so) new nephew;

For a bountiful garden (and church friends who like cucumber & zucchini);

For Fred Loskamp, Susan Haight's brother, recovering from surgery and
its complications;

For Dave Larkin's great oncology team which spotted an additional cancer
site, even as the old one is declared clear;

For the fun of discovering that our story intersects with another's

Their joy is part of the good news of salvation.

Then send us to bring your word to others
whose lives are weighed down with concerns
whom we can join in prayer

For the landslide of changes the coronavirus is throwing at us;

For Greg d'Arbonne, friend of the church, recovering from cancer surgery;

For the dead and injured in the explosion in Beirut and for the community
trying to get back on their feet in the midst of the pandemic;

For the families in ICE detention centers awaiting legal hearings, especially
the kids;

For the stories we have yet to hear that will open us more fully to the
Kingdom of God

Their concerns can be shared, can be eased,
Which is part of the good news of salvation.

You have promised that
Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved

Please accept our prayers of gratitude for this promise.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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: *Oh Me of Little Faith* by Matthew West

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

Scripture Reading: Romans 10:5-15

[\[Romans 10:5-15 read for you\]](#)

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that 'the person who does these things will live by them.' But the righteousness that comes from faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or "Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say?

'The word is near you,

on your lips and in your heart'

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

We all get seduced by something. Another round of solitaire on our computers. An extra beer after mowing the lawn on a summer's afternoon. Pretty stationery on sale (as if I wasn't already awash in note cards!). But we're not always aware of how seductive rules are. That's part of what's breaking Paul's heart in today's reading from Romans.

Rules give us a framework, a geography, a geometry to live inside of. There's a rule that says we drive on the right. Clearly a good idea to keep everyone going in the same direction on the same side of the road. But up here in Maine, the roads are very narrow and pretty twisty. And where my folks live is pretty scenic. So there are walkers and cyclists and no sidewalks and people swerving all over the place, and missing the signs when the speed limit drops from 45 to 25, and surging up on folks who have slowed to a crawl because they're fascinated with the view out to sea, especially after the remains of a tropical storm roll through and the surf is up. The rule "drive on the right" is such a good one, but it's barely applicable with so many obstacles. Yet we're so committed to living inside it that we get angry, we get livid, when people aren't following the rule.

Part of what gets us angry is that something we thought was under control is plainly, pointedly, obviously out of our control.

Paul is struggling to explain to himself, to the church in Rome, why more Jews haven't accepted Jesus as a Messiah. One of the ways he knows they haven't is that they are still convinced that staying inside the rules laid down by the laws of Moses is the way to salvation. Paul understands that, because he had the same conviction. When he talked about ascending into heaven (Romans 10:6) or descending into the abyss (Romans 10:7) he was actually paraphrasing Deuteronomy, where Moses was speaking about the reach of the Law.² Paul wants folks to understand that the world has changed with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Before, if you wanted to know who was in your circle of believers, you trooped around the edge of the circle, and you determined who was in and who was out. With Jesus, there's a whole new geometry. Jesus is the center, the point we all orient ourselves toward. Jesus is the focus, not paying attention to who is in and

² Kyle D. Fedler, "Proper 14, Theological Perspective, Romans 10:5-15" 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), 328.

who is out. When we focus on the center we can live as though the circle is infinite. Which it is.³

Because all along, from the giving of the laws on Mt. Sinai, to the giving of Jesus Christ as fully human and fully divine, living among us, to the rebellion of the Reformation, when Martin Luther parted ways with the Holy Roman church, God has been perfectly clear. God decides who is saved and who is not. Not us. We don't get to make that decision for others. We don't get to make that decision for ourselves. There is nothing we can do, no careful navigation, no set of rules we can follow that will guarantee our salvation. And thank God for that.

We need to orient our hearts and our words so that how we live our lives and what we say show that we understand that. Because when we turn our lives so they are centered on Jesus' love and justice, we act that way, we talk that way. When we turn our lives toward the One God raised from the dead (Romans 10:9), then death can't paralyze us. We can comfort the elderly in the nursing home down the street and act for the families in Lebanon reeling under the dual hammer blows of the pandemic and the explosion. We can speak up for the families in Syria and Yemen and on our own border where children need to be fed and the pandemic addressed.

Today's passage from Romans reminds us that God is in charge of salvation. This is good news for those who cannot do enough for God, and for those who claim that others are not doing enough; for those who berate themselves for not being good enough, and for those who disdain others for not measuring up; for those who wonder about the salvation of those whom they love, and for those who would withhold salvation from those whom they are unable to love; for those who come to the end of their lives and worry about their future, and for those who go through their lives never giving a thought for the morrow.⁴ God is in charge of salvation, not us. We are in charge of getting ourselves focused in the right direction. By staying focused on Jesus, we're not going to be seduced by the rules that let us pretend that we're in control. By staying focused on Jesus, on his love and justice, we'll help others to see what we see. That the circle is growing and there are way more of us in it than we could ever imagine.

³ Martha C. Highsmith, "Proper 14, Pastoral Perspective, Romans 10:5-15" 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), 328.

⁴ Karen Pidock-Lester, "Romans 10:5-15." *Interpretation* 50, no. 3 (1996): 292.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

Compassionate God,
Because God cares for all without distinction
and is generous to all beyond measure,
so we, God's people,
are to care for all with generosity and gladness.
We thank you for your call and claim upon our lives.
Because there is so much more we can become,
and so much more we can do,
we pray that our faith will increase;
that our practice of generosity will be enlarged;
and that our joy in believing
will encourage others
as we share with them the good news of Jesus Christ;
in whose name we pray. Amen

Hymn: *Good News, Good News to You We Bring*

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

Leader: Compassionate God, as we head back out into the world, we ask that
this week,

All: We carry your word a little closer, a little louder,

Leader: We ask that we believe in our hearts and confess in our mouths.

All: So that we can show everyone what it looks like to be saved.

Leader: We'll look the same as always.

All: But our way will be easier.

Leader: Because your word will be with us.

All: And belief is enough for anyone to be saved. 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: [May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You](#) by Aled Jones & Russell
Watson**

[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 (8/9/20)

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.

- Friends & family of Shirley Jeffreys, Hazel Corey, Jerry King, Tre Rouse, Tasha Feller, Pat Tiner, Terry House and Rev. Tom Atherton.
- 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 the landslide of changes the coronavirus is throwing at us;
- For Greg d'Arbonne, friend of the church, recovering from cancer surgery;
- For the dead and injured in the explosion in Beirut and for the community trying to get back on their feet in the midst of the pandemic;
- For the families in ICE detention centers awaiting legal hearings, especially the kids;
- For the stories we have yet to hear that will open us more fully to the Kingdom of God
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Holy God, the new day begins with such promise. Help me to enter into this day with joy and confidence in your power and goodness. Whatever challenge I may face, help me to trust in your presence, remembering that you are stronger than any difficulty or threat.

If you will surround me in the embrace and affection of steadfast love and faithfulness, of righteousness and peace, then I will be lifted up and strengthened to follow you. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen

Household Prayer: Evening

Gracious God, favor me with the sheer silence of your presence at the end of this day. Quiet any voices of fear and doubt that would trouble me, toss and turn me. Grant me, and anyone who enters the night hours with anxiety or pain, your perfect peace. Favor your children with calm and rest, with healing and renewal, as we sleep and dream in your arms of mercy. In your Son's dear name, I pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

After Jesus caught Peter in the water, was Jesus' question, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" a reproach? When we are facing a great difficulty, do we doubt God's power? Do we doubt ourselves? Can you recall other biblical stories, or a story from your own life, when God reached out to rescue or to overcome doubt and fear with the gift of increased faith?

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 +/-
July	\$42,784	\$48,975	(\$6,191)

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.

Register to Vote

The Town of Brookline has put out guidelines on the variety of ways you can register to vote. You can certainly register to vote on election day, but to avoid standing in line, you can do it ahead, either in person or by mail.

For more information, see the information on the [town website](#).

Volunteer at the Polls

The polls for both the state primary on September 8 and the general election on November 3 need volunteers. If you are able to volunteer, in this time when so many of our neighbors cannot, please contact the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Patricia Howard-Barnett at (603) 673-8855 x4 or patti@brooklinenh.us

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/>