



*Brookline Community Church and
Second Congregational Church of Newcastle
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
August 30, 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: [A Short Beautiful Piano Piece - Improv](#) by Jervy Hou

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

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

Leader: God of genuine Love,
rain down your love
on California
on all the creatures
in the midst of wildfires
and downwind of their spread.

**All: Wait with those who are evacuated
for news of homes, family.**

Leader: Be strength in those who mobilize
to fight these fires
in the jagged unexpected chaos
of so many lightning strikes
that ignite dry land.

**All: Go out on every call
with those who respond
to power outages in the heat wave.**

Leader: And as the air worsens
and people struggle to breathe,
and fear makes breathing even harder
because of the pandemic
that attacks respiration itself —
rest a calming hand on all.

May the cool breath of dawn,
Or the gently withheld breath
of a mask-wearer,

**All: share the breathing prayers of all the world
and fill tomorrow with hope. Amen.¹**

Hymn: *The Servant Song* by Diocese of St. Benedict

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

If you have a favorite hymn you'd like to include in our worship service, just send it along and I'll look for a good place for it.

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

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

O God of genuine Love,
We pray to you saying:
Merciful God, hear our prayer.

¹ Today's opening and closing prayers were inspired by Maren Tirabassi, "Prayer for the fires in California," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted August 19, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/08/19/prayer-for-the-fires-in-california/> (accessed August 22, 2020).

Bless the church,
deliver it from evil,
and make it holy in every way,
that all people may see the light of your salvation
through the witness of your faithful servants.

For the church of Jesus Christ,
Merciful God, **hear our prayer. . . .**

Uphold the leaders of governments
Especially President Trump, Governor Sununu, Governor Mills
Give them sound judgment and merciful hearts,
and lead them to do what is right in upholding the common good.

For the world and for its leaders,
Merciful God, **hear our prayer. . . .**

Sing with those lifted up with joys

For the nice Canadian lady who drove Barbara's college age relative with
her stuff from the US/Canadian border to the University of Toronto, moved
the girl into her dorm, then drove her parents' empty truck back to the
border so they could go home.

For adding Mt. Osceola and East Osceola to John's 4,000 footer list

For Flora, Marjorie's mom, and her 93rd Birthday Party car parade, seeing
all those she loves and who love her in their costumes, with balloons and
posters to celebrate the big day

For Dave's new job, getting rid of the long commute that kept him too far
away from Marjorie

For the joys we know now and will know in the future,
Merciful God, **hear our prayer. . . .**

Comfort those weighed down with concerns

For the fears we might lose the nuances and justice will pivot to vengeance

For Dave's mom, struggling with the isolation that Covid-19 is bringing to
those in assisted living facilities

For the concerns you share with us now and in the future,
Merciful God, **hear our prayer. . . .**

Let Earth be a gentle home for us.

Subdue the violence of hurricane and wildfire,
and heal the destruction of flood and drought,
that life may flourish
and every creature rejoice in the goodness of creation.

For the good earth,
Merciful God, **hear our prayer. . . .**

These prayers we offer through Christ
by the power of your 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.]

Anthem: *The Summons* by John L. Bell

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video ask us a bunch of questions that will lead us down the same road as the reading from Romans.]

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:9-21

[\[Romans 12:9-21\]](#) read for you by Pam Gormley our lay leader from Second Congregational]

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

Jesus calls us to live in the real world, not the world to come, not the world as we would like it to be with all the knuckle heads taken out of it. Jesus calls us to live in the real, messy, mean, difficult world as it is. And we're supposed to live in the real world his way. He's asking a lot, and he knows he is. *If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me* (Matthew 16:24).

We live in a world of wildfires and hurricanes. We know what to do then. Natural disasters are why God invented casseroles and neighbors who show up with work gloves and Hefty bags. And if the scale is a little beyond a pan of lasagna, we can contribute money to Outreach and they'll get it to the [UCC Disaster Ministries](#) and help will get to Iowa after the derecho there, and to Lebanon to help in the aftermath of the explosion and down to Louisiana and Texas. We can live in that world, we get it, we can *contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers* (Romans 12:13). It's not easy, but we do it.

We live in the world of the upcoming presidential election. We're less sure what to do there. We've seen the polls and we know we're divided. And we know that in the end, someone is going to win and whoever loses is going to feel like their votes and their voices were ignored, dismissed, passed over.

We live in small towns and we know perfectly well who has what lawn sign. And we know perfectly well whose lawn signs doesn't match ours. But we still worship with them, we still stand with them in coffee hour (back when coffee hour was a thing) and ask about their grandkids and how their golf game is coming along. We're one of the last places in America that still knows how to talk and care across that division. It's not always easy, but we have the skills do to it. And we have the skills to show the rest of our communities how to remain in relationship with people who don't agree with us.

We know our history, not only the last 240 years, but the last 7,000. God recruited not from the mighty, but from the wretched of the earth. We were strangers in a strange land, first slaves in Egypt and then nomads in a wilderness. As Christians we became friends with God when we were strangers, helpless and ungodly, trailing along the dusty roads to Jerusalem.² So when we're reminded to *live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly*; (Romans 12:16), we get it. We know how to live in that world, because we've been doing it for millennia. It's not easy, but we do it.

We live in the world of racism, income inequality and destruction of democracy. We know that evil is in the world, as it has always been, and we know that it is a

² Carl E. Braaten, "Romans 12:14-21." *Interpretation* 38, no. 3 (1984): 293-294.

fearsome power, as it has always been. We look at Belarus and Hong Kong, Russia and Syria, Brazil and the Philippines and we look at our own country. We worry that we are on a road that is leading somewhere we don't want to go. But we can't seem to agree on solutions to take another path.

We know what evil wants. Evil wants it all. Evil doesn't want to control one side of the situation. Evil wants to infect everyone, to get everyone retaliating against everyone else. And we know what Christ did. Christ took all the meanness of the world and ran it through the filter of his own body, repaying evil with good, blame with pardon, death with life.³ We know all that and we know that we're not supposed to *repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all* (Romans 12:17). We know that. And we know it's really hard to do and we even try with all our strength to do it. And frankly, if we get it right 80% of the time, we should probably feel pretty good about our efforts. Because we picked up our cross and we followed Jesus. Even when the rest of the world called us idiots or worse for our efforts. It's not easy, but we do it.

Jesus calls us to live in the real world. So when natural disaster strikes, and the political divide widens and evil gets going a little faster in our world, we lift our cross on to our shoulder and we go out there. And we *rejoice in hope, are patient in suffering, persevere in prayer* (Romans 12:12). *We love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor* (Romans 12:10). *We bless those who persecute us; bless and do not curse them* (Romans 12:14). We do all that, because we're Christians and living in the real world means lugging our cross around and genuinely loving people who clearly do not deserve it.

Jesus calls us to live in the real world. And in the real world, there comes a time when we're doing the dishes, or arguing with our computer to get it to do something it knows perfectly well how to do, or we're just driving down a road with trees on either side and a hawk circling overhead. And in that real world, when we're not expecting it, the Voice comes. The Voice comes and says we're not smart enough or thin enough or rich enough or tough enough or funny enough or ambitious enough or young enough or white enough. In that moment, the Voice is right and there is nothing we can do to counter it.

We clean up after the hurricane, we bridge the political division, we repay evil with goodness. But the Voice defeats us. And that's real too. That's when you need another Christian to remind you where it all comes from. So think of someone who you could call to remind you of where it all comes from, why we do all this hard, hard work in the first place. [A pause to think of someone.] *I have loved you with an everlasting love* (Jeremiah 31:3). *I have carried you in the*

³ Barbara Brown Taylor, "It's Hard to Hug a Bully: It is easier to repay evil for evil, but then all you've got is evil." *Christianity Today* 43, no. 1 (1999): 74-75.

hollow of my hand (Isaiah 49:2). *I am with you always* (Matthew 28:20). All the love we offer the real world, all that love is just flowing through us from the God who has loved us from the beginning and will love us through any ending we might imagine in this all too real world. As skilled as we are in loving the world, and we can always get better, we are also part of this real world. And we all need help remembering at times where the love comes from. It's not easy, but we do it, we can reach out for help.

So answer Jesus' call. Live in the real world, as miserable and messed up as it is. But remember how much a part of that world we all are. We all need help asking for and accepting the love that is ours. Because that's real too. It's not easy, but we can do it, we can reach out for help. Amen.

Hymn: *A Heart that Forgives* by Kevin Levar

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

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

[[Let's pray together](#) with Bill Bausch our lay leader from Second Congregational.]

O God of genuine Love,

The apostle Paul encourages us:

do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.

but we question our fitness to serve

heaven's purposes on earth.

Overcome our qualms with the assurance

of your presence;

So we may take the gifts you have given us,

the hope, patience and perseverance,

the hospitality to strangers, the willingness to live peaceably with all,

that, through those gifts,

we may do your will

and overcome evil with good;

in the name of the triune One. **Amen.**

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

[[Let's pray together](#). Thanks, Jill, Kevin, Pam and Bill, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

Leader: God of genuine Love,
As we head back out into this coming week,
Help us to breathe,
Behind our masks but still

**All: In the face of wildfire and hurricane,
In the face of fear,
In the face of evil.**

Leader: Help us to breathe

**All: In the patience you showed us in suffering
In the perseverance you showed us in prayer,
In the humility you offered us in your wisdom**

Leader: Help us to breathe
To share the prayers of the world,

**All: As we overcome evil with good,
And await the coming of your reign on this sweet earth
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: [For the One](#) by Brian & Jenn Johnson

[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 (8/30/20)

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 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 fears we might lose the nuances and justice will pivot to vengeance
- For Dave's mom, struggling with the isolation that Covid-19 is bringing to those in assisted living facilities
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Lord Jesus, I do not know what crosses may arise before me, but give me courage to resist systems of injustice, strength to reject structures of oppression, and wisdom to unmask powers of evil, that I may live as a faithful disciple whose life belongs to you. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Lord Jesus, if I have lived this day for worldly gain, re-center my life, set me on the path of sincere discipleship, and lead me in the way that leads to eternal life. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What does it mean for me to take up my cross and follow Jesus? How do I practice that in my daily life? How is the cross I am asked to bear related to the cross of Jesus?

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)

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

Complete Your Census Form

You can help Brookline and NH get its share of federal resources as well as all the other goods and services driven by the census data. Make sure [you've filled out your census form!](#)

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.