



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
September 6, 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 Romantic Piano Piece](#) by Jervy Hou

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

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

Almighty God,
During this new Exodus time
When the rules are all changing
Some being thrown away
Some being newly enforced by law or social custom
Walk with us through this wilderness.
Help us mark time, when every day seems the same
And the future we are imagining never seems to get any closer
And strife and division fill our days.

Almighty God,
whose ways are far beyond our understanding,
help us to trust your judgments
so that we may do your will
by loving you and one another.
In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Hymn: As We Gather

[[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 from Psalm 81:¹

We make a joyful muffled noise –
rhythm and blues, country, rap,
a masked, distanced, sweet response to the voice of God –

“I relieved your shoulder of the burden
and your hands were freed from the basket.”

We Zoom, Google Meet, Livestream
Drive-in and Pew-space!

“I relieved your shoulder of the burden
and your hands were freed from the basket.”

The first Exodus released those unjustly worked
to bring them to a new and safe place.

This is a new Exodus time,
a time to give attention to
domestic workers, migrant workers,
food service folks heading to the curbside,
housekeepers keeping motels COVID-clean,
to those in mandatory overtime,
those jobless and waiting,
those who work in dangerous conditions.

For we experience the voice of God, saying –
I will give you finest wheat;
from the rock, I give you honey.

¹ Today's communion liturgy was written by Maren Tirabassi , “Holy Communion Liturgy for September 6, 2020,” Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted August 28, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/08/28/12857/> (accessed August 29, 2020).

Prayer of Consecration:

Leader: In the Bread we eat, we honor farmers and bakers.
we honor truck drivers, and those who stock grocery shelves.
In the Cup we drink, we honor those who pick fruit,
and those who work in bottling plants.
In Bread and Cup, we honor those who have written,
translated, printed, sold, given, and taught
the Good News of the new covenant.

(Each person laying hands on bread and cup)

Leader: Holy One, this is the Sacrament we share, because others have
passed it on – spiritually and physically – to each of us. We pray that
your Spirit of life and love, of tenderness and power,

All: rest upon every bread and every cup,

Leader: so that they may feed our inmost needs,

All: and pour forth a grace that can change the world

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

All: Amen.

Words of Remembering

Leader: Jesus, our divine companion,
by a lowly human birth
surely came to join the workers,
burden bearers of the Earth –
known as carpenter of Nazareth,
gathered those who fish for food,
promised – “raise the stone and find me,
I am here, just cleave the wood.”

In the times of fires and flooding,
Here Christ is to claim and own;
where the virus finds a victim,
no one shall be left alone.

Christ the peace which passes knowledge
dwells within the daily strife;
in the bread of Heaven broken
in the sacrament of life.

My friends, We 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.

And on Easter afternoon in Emmaus,
Jesus reminded us that the bread of welcome
on anyone's table, on everyone's table,
is blessed to be a holy sacrament,
sending us out
to find the cup in the world around us.

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: The bread on your table is blessed and broken. As long as it is open to all, it is holy.

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: O Holy One, we give you thanks for honey from rocky times,

All: hope from fearful thoughts and burdened shoulders,

Leader: bread and roses from the labor of hands and minds,

All: and your blessing as we receive this sacrament.

Leader: in the holy dispersion of virtual worship to reach out and change your world one footwashing servanthood at a time, one Emmaus joy at a time.

All: Amen.

Hymn: *In Remembrance of You* by Cheri Keaggy

[[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.](#)]

Almighty God,
we thank you for your commandments,
which order our life together.
Increase in us, we pray,
the capacity to love you and our neighbors
without reserve
and to love even those who harm us.
Not halfheartedly,
but with our whole hearts,
we bring before you
the cares, the concerns, and the joys that occupy us.

We remember before you
those who are at odds with one another
in families,
in neighborhoods or offices,
and even in the church.
We pray for nations
in the midst of internal or external struggles and conflict.
Teach us, O God,
to seek nonviolent ways toward resolution.
Help us to speak the truth
and to listen with understanding when perspectives are far apart.
We pray for love to bring peace into every troubled heart and place.

We remember before you
those who have physical needs today.
People who are hungry and thirsty;
people who are exhausted by the demands of work or caregiving;
people who are sick, or undergoing surgery;
and people who live with chronic pain.
Bring relief and rest, we pray.

We remember those weighed down
with needs of heart and soul.
A worry that keeps us awake at night,
grief that accompanies us everywhere we go,
depression that clouds us,
or an addiction that grips us.
Sustain us over the long journey toward health
and give us trust
in you, ourselves, and those who love us.

We pray for all these concerns,
For Bev Zimmerman's daughter Julie, who is struggling with a brain tumor
For Sanjay's friends, whose 21-year-old son was killed in a diving accident
For whatever goals China is pursuing in this time of turmoil;
For those of us who feel powerless that we might remember we still have
the power to hurt each other;

Lift all of these heavy burdens
with the light and peace of your presence, we pray.

We remember before you not only our concerns,
but also our joys—

For Kristine Brock & Mike Mancuso who plan to marry in October;
For Emma, John Panto's daughter, who got engaged to Connor;
For Russell's birthday, celebrated with socially distanced family & friends;
For our default to think the best of people even if that sometimes means
our good natures are taken advantage of

We thank you, O God, for the gift of laughter,
for enduring friendships,
and for cherished memories.

We give thanks that with you
there is always a new beginning,
a way where this is no way,
hope beyond hope,
and life beyond death.

Through Jesus Christ, our risen 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.]

Anthem: *Love Your Neighbor* by Mr. Chubby x Kellysongz

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

Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:15-20

[\[Matthew 18:15-20 read for you\]](#)

'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

The reading from Matthew 18 lays out what to do when there is conflict in a church community. First the person who was offended goes to the offender. If there isn't reconciliation, then the offended grabs one or two other people and tries again. Still no reconciliation? Then the offended gets the whole church involved. And if that doesn't work, there is a remedy where the community can place them outside the circle of intimacy that the community has formed.

The way it's laid out, it gives multiple opportunities for reconciliation, for the matter to be handled privately and quietly, for simple misunderstandings to be sorted out without dragging everyone into it. I'm grateful to have such an explicit process laid out in the Gospels. If nothing else, it shows that Jesus expected conflict in the communities that gathered in his name.² And, on the face of it, he expected the conflict to increase over time.³ Perhaps that's not surprising when you consider that churches are and should be the place where troublesome people get together.⁴

If I'm honest, I would love to be able to use that process in our political environment. I'd demand to be put on someone's schedule. And then I'd let

² Jin S. Kim, "Proper 18, Pastoral Perspective, Matthew 18:15-20" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A, Volume 4*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 46.

³ Anna Carter Florence, "Fourteenth 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), 114.

⁴ Eric Barreto, "Commentary on the Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for September 7, 2014, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost", https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=492&print_type=comm&is_sp_anish=0 (accessed 18 April 2020).

them know how they offended me. Then, when we weren't reconciled, I'd go get one or two others and try again. Then I'd get the whole community involved. And in the end, we'd probably draw a circle around ourselves and say that we'd be in relationship with that person, but only in a very distant way. Basically, I'd have done all the steps I need to do in order to cross them off the Christmas card list. They are effectively out of my life until they change their tune. Regardless which end of the political spectrum you're on, I think most people agree that that's exactly how it would go, with no reconciliation happening at all. So you could argue it's a lousy way to produce reconciliation.

It does have some strengths. It's easier to know when you've been offended than when you've offended someone.⁵ It does expect action from the person who has been offended, so the offense doesn't get to fester. It does get the community involved, so one exotic sense of grievance will be checked by the rest of the folks saying, "hold on, that's not worth getting bent out of shape about."

But those strengths become weaknesses outside of a church community. Yes, it is easier to know when you're offended than when you've offended someone. But if you value being right more than being in relationship, then there's clearly an easy way for you to keep gathering people around you who also think you're right. You never have to reflect on what you might need to change in order to restore the relationship. What's laid out in Matthew 18 assumes there's a relationship there to begin with. How else are you going to approach someone and say, "hey, you know that thing you said. It really hurt."? Churches assume there is a relationship between everyone and God and therefore between everyone and everyone else. Churches are a place where we work on those relationships. Even when we don't want to. Especially when we don't want to.

Churches also have a stated bias to favor the weak and unimportant over the powerful and the important. If you read Matthew chapter 18 leading up to today's verses, you see Jesus dismissing the question of "who is the greatest?" and what to do when some innocent sheep wanders away on its own. I can call up someone and demand to be put on their schedule so I can let them know how they have offended me. But I just some random jamoke. I'm not going to get through the first step in the process because I'm nobody. They are safe in ignoring me.

In a church, we're supposed to defend all the Nobodies and make sure their voices can be heard. Indeed, when you read about instances where the Matthew 18 process has failed in churches, quite often it's where offenders say that the process wasn't followed, that the first step of one on one reconciliation wasn't

⁵ Audrey West, "Commentary on the Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for September 6, 2020, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost", http://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=1299&print_type=comm&is_spanish=0 (accessed 31 August 2020)

attempted. Only those offenders were people who preyed on the weak and vulnerable Nobodies, who wanted the one on one conversations to intimidate and threaten them into further silence. Even as churches, we are biased to give the rich and powerful more sway in our communal life. But we're supposed to pay attention to the least of these, not the greatest among us.

We can look at the process in Matthew 18 and we can think it's great because it's so clear or not so great because it's so vulnerable to the worst of human nature. But look what it says at the end: *For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them* (Matthew 18:20). Our life together is how God has chosen to be with us. Our life together is of ultimate importance to God. It's where we are comforted, confronted, tested and hopefully redeemed, by God, through one another. It's where we come to know God or flee from God, precisely because we come to know or flee from each other.⁶

Part of what church is is not a place to retreat from the real world, but a place to engage the real world, subject to Christ's loving presence and expectation. It's a place to try out what the real world would be like if we truly gave preference to the nobodies, where everyone was held to loving account, not just the scapegoats that the majority turned against. Loving God and loving your neighbor, and we're catching on that the two aren't that different from one another, isn't easy, even when Jesus lays out step-by-step instructions on what to do. Because in the end we have to do the work. The hard work. But it is in that hard work that we come that much closer to God. Amen.

Hymn: *Love Your Neighbor* by Jamie Kimmett

[[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.](#)]

Almighty God,
we know what time it is—
time to wake from sleep
and to turn from selfishness.
We offer our time,
our talents, and our resources
to be used for your good purposes
and all for love's sake.
Through Jesus the Christ we pray. **Amen.**

⁶ Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Seeds of Heaven: Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 89.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

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

Almighty God,

As we head back out into this coming week

Help us during this new Exodus

Help us to understand the new rules, the new norms

Help us to show our love for our neighbors in new ways

Help us to be patient with our own fears

And the fears of others.

Help us to find new ways of marking time

So that we live into the future you are calling us to

Even if it feels like it will never come.

Help us to honor the labor of all those who bear extra burdens during this time of pandemic,

Watch over those who are working so hard to make the school year a success despite all the challenges.

Bring us out of the wilderness soon.

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: [The Gathering](#) by Casey J

[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 (9/6/20)

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 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 Bev Zimmerman's daughter Julie, who is struggling with a brain tumor
- For Sanjay's friends, whose 21-year-old son was killed in a diving accident
- For whatever goals China is pursuing in this time of turmoil;
- For those of us who feel powerless that we might remember we still have the power to hurt each other;
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Good morning, God. Thank you for the invitation to live faithfully today, walking in your paths, loving my neighbor. The day is new, unmarred by missteps or words misspoken, so I pause in this newness to remember your commandments and to delight in them. Help me to follow you all through this day. Keep my feet from stumbling or wandering down other trails so that I honor you and others in word and deed. In Christ I pray. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Loving God, as I have put on Christ in my words and deeds today, now let me rest in Christ's light and presence as the evening comes. Awake or asleep, you watch over me, and I am grateful you love me so. I turn my whole heart to you in love, and my heart is full of love and care for my family and friends and for all those whom you have made my neighbor. In the quiet hours of sleep, mend in me whatever is unresolved from the day now past, and wake me with the morning light, and with your grace yet again. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

The passage from Matthew (18:15–20) is concerned with church discipline in a time of conflict. The focus, however, is not on punishment or blame, but on listening and talking through what has divided so that reconciliation may be accomplished. Does your church have a prescribed way of working through difficulty and division? Has there been a time in your congregation's life or in your own life when conflict or an offense caused breaks in relationship? How might this reading from Matthew have helped that situation?

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](https://www.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	\$68,133	\$55,214	\$12,919

Christmas Faire

There will be a Christmas Faire (or maybe this year we will have an Un-Faire??) meeting coming up soon, please email carolcherian@gmail.com if you are interested in participating or if you have ideas for this year’s faire. Date and time TBD depending on the schedules of those who respond.

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](#).

Vote in the NH Primary on September 8, 2020

The Town posted the following:

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT DETAILS: Polls will be open from 7am to 7:30pm. All voting takes place at Captain Samuel Douglass Academy ("CSDA") located at 24 Townsend Hill Road. Please remember to bring a photo ID.

Those who have voted before at CSDA will find much of the process familiar with a few exceptions: masks or face coverings are required to enter the front of the building and vote in the gym. Individuals not wearing a mask/face covering will be directed to the school’s right side door to vote. Ballot clerks will be behind plexi-glass shields as they check you in. You will be receiving your own pen and a paper “ballot mat” when you check-in. Please place the mat under your ballot as you vote and discard it at the ballot box. The ballot mat is provided so the voting booths do not need to be wiped down after each voter. Please leave your pen in the marked box as you exit. While we know voting often provides an opportunity to meet and converse with your fellow residents, these are different times and we ask that you move through the building as efficiently as possible.

If you are not registered to vote, you may do so at the polls on election day. You need to bring a proof of identity, age, domicile and citizenship.

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.