



*Brookline Community Church*  
*Worshiping Apart*  
*Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister*  
September 20, 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: [Mirrors](#) by Lights & Motion**

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

**Centering Ourselves for Worship<sup>1</sup>:**

[Join Carol Cherian and Cindy Perkins, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
Your glory, coming to us in galaxies  
that have been sung to sleep  
many light-years ago,  
is the same as the waking cry of our infants,  
or the "twinkle, twinkle" song of toddlers,

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<sup>1</sup> Today's open and closing prayers were inspired by a poem by Maren Tirabassi, "Living Psalm Version – Psalm 8" Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted June 1, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/06/01/living-psalm-version-psalm-8/> (accessed September 13, 2020).

**All: You are a vaccine of the spirit against those who live by violence, and you fit to us the mask of kindness, so we bless one another when we are near.**

Leader: When we turn to Slooh or Hubble to live-stream the nebulae of your fingers, or claim new dark-sky geography as a refuge for much-needed night — what are human beings that you are mindful of us, your castaways on earth that you notice us?

**All: Yet you make us little lower than God, lit with imagination, fragile against virus, but able to claim that it is no crown — for our crown is hope.**

Leader: You give us responsibility for the well-being of precious handfuls of your creation — Ice caps, rainforests, barrier reefs, climate.

And even through cyclone and wildfires, and, in spite of endangered creatures and those who have been lost, you put our feet on the path of care for domestic and wild animals, birds of the air, fish of the sea, and all sea creatures – coral and dolphin, seal and eel, whale and oyster.

**All: We do not sing in these days but we whisper with great joy — O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

**Hymn: *Oh Our Lord* by Paul Baloche**

[[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, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
We are grateful that you are slow to anger,  
for there is much in this world that is wrong  
and set against your purposes.

Overcome our many injustices with your justice;  
overtake our lust for revenge with your great mercy.

We pray for nations locked in enmity  
to be set free from old patterns  
and to embrace a new way of relating.

We pray for people who wield economic power  
to take notice of those whom you notice  
and to have compassion for those who are vulnerable.

We pray for day laborers and the unemployed  
and the homeless.

Inspire us who have enough to share what we have,  
not in measured and resentful amounts,  
but gladly, abundantly,  
so basic needs do not go unattended.

In all the earth, come closer to those weighed down with concerns.

We pray for them in their time of burden,

For those who continue to struggle with the fallout from COVID-19 may  
their struggles lessen and their burden be lighter

For the original sins we inherited and how hard our struggle is to get past  
them

For Bob, Ann's friend, who suffered a heart attack

For Nathan, Barbara's friend, who collapsed while running and will have a  
tough recovery

For Donna and her mom, as they move into the end of her mom's journey

For Ann's father's continuing journey with Parkinson's, may he find a way  
forward

For Marie, Susan Haight's ex-sister-in-law, who passed away this week  
from colon cancer

For Levi, friend of the church, and his dad, who is moving through a tough  
medical diagnosis

For David, Catherine's friend, who is just beginning his journey with  
cancer,

For those touched by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. In the  
Jewish tradition, one who dies on Rosh Hashanah, as she did, is a *tzaddik*,  
a person of great righteousness. May her memory be a blessing.

Ease their concerns until they are released

And all are one in your name.

In all the earth, come closer to those lifted up with joys  
We pray for them in their time of dancing  
For Becca's continuing transition from college to The Next Stage, having  
found a new job

For Ann's parents' 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary

Sing with them as long as joy lasts  
Let all be one in your name.

Gather up the first and the last,  
the least and the greatest,  
in the common work of your kingdom,  
until there is no more first or last at all,  
for all are one in your name.

Help us all to see not only your grace at work in the world,  
but also your humor at work among us,  
the holy laughter that heals us  
and helps us see ourselves rightly.

We thank you for the privilege of believing in Christ,  
of living in Christ,  
and of living for Christ.  
In all things, at all times,  
we give thanks to you,  
who never lets us go;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior. 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](mailto:minister@bccnh.org) or call/text (978) 494-6953.]

**Hymn: *Through All of It* by Colton Dixon**

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

**Scripture Reading: Jonah 3:10-4:11**

[\[Jonah 3:10-4:11 read for you\]](#)

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' Then the LORD said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

### **Reflection on the Scripture:**

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

So here we are. We didn't want to go to Nineveh, in fact we booked it out of town going the other way. Only there was that storm. Then the big fish, the whale thing. That was honestly unpleasant, but when we were chucked up on shore, well, there we were, in Nineveh. And the only thing to do was get it over with. No one ever listens to prophets, so we went a third of the way through the city, saying, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' (Jonah 3:4). And wouldn't you know, they listened and repented. Everybody, king, cattle, everybody. So we bailed. Went out into the desert, found a good vantage point, built a little shelter for ourselves, nothing too elaborate, and sat back to watch the show. We wanted to be out of the way when God started destroying Nineveh. Only God won't stop talking at us, and nothing is getting destroyed except us in this wretched sun, and we just want to die.

You know, that's the point of the book of Jonah. To give us a cranky toddler of a man to laugh at because he's so incredibly over the top in his grumpiness. We

all remember the whale part of the story, but that's just three lines.<sup>2</sup> If this were a normal prophet who goes to tell people to repent, the whole story would end when the city repented. Although, normally the prophets tell people to repent and no one does.

This crazy little story, with this hilarious main character, who is so peevish, who yells at God when he's angry, *I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing* (Jonah 4:2). No one should have to put up with mercy and abounding love from their God.

We laugh at him because he's so over the top. We laugh at him, and something cracks open, and we catch a glimpse of ourselves. Perhaps that's why the Jews read the book of Jonah on the Day of Atonement, when everyone is called to make right their transgressions. Because cranky little Jonah is the best guide to how we fail to remain right with each other and with God.

When God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh, Jonah boards a ship and heads for Tarshish, in Spain, at the exact opposite end of the Mediterranean. Jonah disobeyed God's command, yet Jonah doesn't seem to notice there's no lightning bolt, no wrath at all. God pursues Jonah with persistent love.<sup>3</sup> God doesn't even let Jonah drown in the storm. And it never seems to cross Jonah's mind that the pagans, the sailors on the ship make every attempt to save him from harm at all costs – they act more like God than he did.<sup>4</sup> Even the fish was more obedient than Jonah, when God tells the fish to vomit up Jonah on the land, it did as it was told.<sup>5</sup> Jonah says he knows God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but he doesn't seem to notice when all that forbearance and love is directed right at him. Just like us, when we don't notice.

The Assyrians, whose capital city was Nineveh, were brutal enemies. They killed and destroyed their way to a huge empire that they then taxed to support their armies for still more empire building. The fall of the northern kingdom of Israel had been traumatic for the whole country. The Assyrians who lived in Nineveh were Jonah's enemies. No one in Jonah's community was going to argue that they should be allowed to repent and be forgiven. They had done the unforgivable. So Jonah resists going to Nineveh and when he's basically dropped on their shore, he does the absolute minimum, then goes up to get a

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<sup>2</sup> James D. Smart, "The Book of Jonah: Introduction," vol. 6 in *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Bible in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1956), 874.

<sup>3</sup> Todd M. Hobbie, "Proper 20, Pastoral Perspective, Jonah 3:10-4:11" 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), 76.

<sup>4</sup> Hobbie, 76.

<sup>5</sup> Hobbie, 76.

good seat to watch God smiting the city. And when that destruction doesn't come, Jonah asks to die. Hatred of the enemy has become so fundamental to Jonah that when their destruction is not going to happen, the desire for vengeance means life is robbed of all meaning.<sup>6</sup> Just like us, when our enemies don't appear to suffer.

God doesn't give up on Jonah. Jonah's got his little hut set up to watch the destruction of Nineveh. God makes a bush spring up to give him more shade. And then a worm causes the bush to wither. Jonah is ripped about the loss of the bush, way more upset about that than the destruction of the city. God points out how much more upset he is about the loss of the plant than the loss of the city and all the lives within it. Just like us, when our comfort is disturbed.

Jonah says that he has always known that God was gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and ready to relent from punishing. And we would say the same thing. But what he misses, what we miss, is that that means God is in relationship,<sup>7</sup> with us, with our enemies, with the natural world. When did Jonah need the shade of the bush the most? When did the people of Nineveh need God the most? Why can't Jonah draw the parallels? Because Jonah is unwilling to extend the benefits of relationship which means Jonah will lose the benefits that come through relationship when he needs them the most. The people of Nineveh see their own wickedness and repent. Jonah never sees his own wicked heart, that allows him to find compassion for a plant but not for people. God is focused on that blindness and is still trying to get Jonah into relationship with his enemies.

Everyone knows that everything called for the elimination of Nineveh: the law called for it, prudence called for it, morality called for it, politics and economics called for it, survival of the fittest called for it.<sup>8</sup> But there was One who saw something different, something more, and far more precious – the God of relationship saw another possibility.

And to be sure we saw it, and saw all the possibilities which surround us, the chance to walk away from nationalism, and racism, and sexism, and homophobia, and nativism and all the other ways we choose to protect our own comfort by damaging and diminishing the relationships we have with each other and with God, God gave us this story about this cranky little prophet.

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<sup>6</sup> James D. Smart, "The Book of Jonah: Exegesis," vol. 6 in *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Bible in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1956), 892.

<sup>7</sup> The idea of this section of Jonah underlining the nature of God as relationship comes from a wonderful commentary by Christopher Davis, "Commentary on the First Reading: Jonah 3:10-4:11", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for September 20, 2020, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost", [http://www.workingpreacher.org/wp\\_print\\_all.aspx?lectionary\\_calendar\\_id=1301&print\\_type=comm&is\\_sermon=0](http://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=1301&print_type=comm&is_sermon=0) (accessed 15 September 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Davis.

So here we are. Are we ready repent, or does God need to go get the whale and the bush and worm to make sure we learn the lesson about being in relationship with each other and with God?

**Hymn: *Most Merciful God* by Chris Pearse**

[[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.](#)]

O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
We are privileged to be counted among those  
whom you have called,  
graced to have been given your work to do,  
blessed to receive more than we will ever earn.  
Accept, we pray, our thanksgivings and offerings,  
and do what you choose  
with what already belongs to you.  
In Christ's name we pray. **Amen.**

**A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World**

[[Let's pray together.](#) Thanks, Carol and Cindy, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

Leader: O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
As we head back out into this coming week,  
Coming at us with a speed greater than light  
Lasting longer than eternity (or so it seems),  
Help us to remember what you have taught us:

**All: You are a vaccine of the spirit against  
those who would write people off,  
and you fit to us the mask of kindness,  
so we bless one another when we are near.**

Leader: In the great universe full of stars and galaxies,  
Bushes and worms and whales,  
Even through wildfires and floods,  
You care for each one of us,  
For our crowded cities,  
And the animals which surround us.

**All: We don't sing these days,  
Until we're home alone,  
But we can whisper with joy  
At the world we are a part of,  
O God, how majestic is your name in all the 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: Majestic by Lincoln Brewster**

[Let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

*Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.*



## PRAYER LIST (9/20/20)

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 those who continue to struggle with the fallout from COVID-19 may their struggles lessen and their burden be lighter
- For Bob, Ann's friend, who suffered a heart attack
- For Nathan, Barbara's friend, who collapsed while running and will have a tough recovery
- For Donna and her mom, as they move into the future
- For Ann's father's continuing journey with Parkinson's, may he find a way forward
- For Marie, Susan Haight's ex-sister-in-law, who passed away this week from colon cancer
- For Levi, friend of the church, and his dad, who is moving through a tough medical diagnosis
- For the original sins we inherited and how hard our struggle is to get past them
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

### **Household Prayer: Morning**

New every morning are your mercies, Lord. Your steadfast love stayed with me through the night and greets me as I rise this day. This morning, I remember and give thanks for parents and grandparents, for teachers and friends in generations past who showed your love and told your stories to me. I pray that I will also share this faith with a new generation so that our praise of you continues forever. I will not be idle today, but will find a way to do whatever work you set before me with a glad and generous heart. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

### **Household Prayer: Evening**

Here at the close of the day, O God, I come to you with open hands to receive the gift of your grace with a thankful spirit. If there is in me any trace of anger or resentment left over from the day, from some slight, big or small, real or imagined, blow it away with the breath of your peace. In the lengthening shadows of evening, comforted by a softer light in stars and moon, quiet within me the duties and cares of the day now past, enabling me to rest in you. In your holy name I pray. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection**

In the stories in Jonah 3:10–4:11 and Matthew 20:1–16, we find others resentful of God's generosity toward the "undeserving." Both stories end with a question worth pondering. God asks Jonah: "Should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city?" and the landowner asks the grumbling all-day workers: "Are you envious because I am generous?" How do these stories of God's generosity invite us to think about our own lives?

### **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://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 +/-
<b>August</b>	\$68,133	\$55,214	\$12,919

## Christmas Faire

There will be a Christmas Faire (or maybe this year we will have an Un-Faire??). Please email [carolcherian@gmail.com](mailto:carolcherian@gmail.com) if you are interested in participating or if you have ideas for this year's faire.

## 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 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](mailto: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 they're looking for:

Juice and Juice Boxes	Chips
Butter and Margarine	Cereal
Cheese (sliced, shredded or block)	Cat Food (Dry and Wet)
Cheese Crackers (like Cheese Nips)	Tissues

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.