



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
September 27, 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: [Almost Remember](#) by Dennis Kuo

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship¹:

[Join [in our centering prayer](#).]

The thing about Zoom worship is,
if I asked you to take off your shoes,
which might be stressful
in a traditional sanctuary –

half of you don't have them on
in the first place,
which says something
about the holiness of home.

¹ Today's open and closing prayers were inspired by a poem by Maren Tirabassi, "A Reflection on Exodus 3:5" Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted August 29, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/08/29/a-reflection-on-exodus-35/> (accessed September 20, 2020).

Another group
are remembering an invitation
that defined some place as holy
maybe a church
or maybe a home —

but it was really paved
in broken glass
and the person you are
was never safe there.

Others may be unwilling
to become vulnerable
at the turn of a preacher's phrase,
because of a long history
of stubbed toes
when trying to get close to hope.

But at least one person realizes
they have never been asked before
to get skin-close,
to an experience with God.

Which is why I am asking ...

Hymn: *One More Step Along the Way I Go*

[[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.](#)]

Holy God,
all lives are yours,
and you do not seek the death of any sinner.

All our lives are yours,
And you seek to comfort those who are worn down with concerns.
Lighten the burdens of those for whom we pray:

For Jon King's broken arm to heal quickly;

For Kym's family in Nebraska, where Jim is in the ICU with Covid-19;

For those caught in natural disasters, even as their destruction has moved
off the front page;

For everyone struggling to walk a road they did not choose;

For the friends and family of June Hoff, Donna's mom, who passed away
on September 20th

All our lives are yours,
Help us to turn, then and live.

All our lives are yours,
And you seek to celebrate with those who are lifted up with joys.
Join with us in celebration with those for whom we pray:

For Nathaniel, Barbara's friend, that he might continue to heal well from his
accident;

For Barbara's neighbor who continues to heal after cardiac surgery;

For Ann, celebrating another birthday on the same day as Megan & Jon's
anniversary;

For a great hike with good friends around the Mt. Morgan and Mt. Percival
Loop on a day where the weather wasn't so promising;

For Levi, friend of the church, whose dad is continuing to improve in the
hospital;

For the fruits of the struggle to learn that more forgiveness leads to more
mercy

All our lives are yours,
Help us to turn, then and live.

Renew our hearts, refresh our spirits,
and help us walk in your holy way,
that we may welcome the impartiality of your judgment
and accept your all-embracing goodness;
through Jesus Christ. **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: *There Are Two Ways*

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

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

[\[Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32\]](#) read for you by today's lay leader, Sanjay Cherian]

The word of the LORD came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

It was a little weird last week to be back in the pulpit at the church. The mask was weird. Making sure that the computer was in synch with where I was in the service was weird. You guys know how unreliable I am at following the bulletin.

You should see me trying to follow a bulletin and a power point! Folks were really spread out, as we needed to be, so I had a much wider sweep to make eye contact. It was nice to be in the sanctuary again, with the beautiful new windows. But it felt a bit unfair. Because not everyone could be there. Plus, the lesson was on Jonah after he gets to Nineveh, and if it wasn't for the pandemic, we would have had a great time working with that story as a group. I had to keep reigning myself in to write the sermon I needed to write, not the one that would have worked so well if we could have done it as a group.

There are so many things these days that seem unfair. Including the Christmas Faire. And no matter how much we feel in our hearts that it's unfair to miss our mother's 91st birthday celebration or having our kid come to visit, or getting to spend freshman year in our dorms or getting laid off because our manager couldn't figure out something more creative to do with us when we could have figured it out in two seconds. No matter what feels unfair to us, most of us just keep our mouths shut. Because there are families who have lost people they love to this pandemic. There are nurses and doctors who have barely slept in months and not hugged their kids at all. There are people working for minimum wage who are taking abuse because they're asking people to wear masks. There are people whose homes are ash or under water. There are people who run from police not because they are trying to evade arrest but because they are afraid of brutality. You want to talk unfair. That's unfair. Not being able to preach a sermon about Jonah the way you want to on a beautiful September morning in the sanctuary you've been homesick for can scarcely be unfair. Not really. Not compared to everything else.

But still.

Whatever the extra is. It's extra. And I can still remember a life, way back in February, where it wasn't extra. I've said to friends that life during the pandemic is like running in snow. You can do it. But it's so much more inefficient.

I didn't cause climate change. I'm doing everything I can to prevent it. I didn't cause racism in this country. I'm fighting against it. I didn't work for income inequality or globalization. I do everything in my power to make sure that people get a decent wage for their work and CEOs don't get paid appalling multiples of what the rest of the people in their organizations get paid. I paid my taxes willingly, fully and on-time because I *know* we need FEMA and the CDC and the FDA because hurricanes and pandemics are always going to come eventually.

So yeah. It is unfair. My teeth are on edge because of something that earlier generations ate.

And that is God's point in the reading from Ezekiel. History matters. We don't come into the world unconnected to what has gone before. We arrive in our generation's moment with six chapters of the novel already written.²

But we are free to take the story wherever we want it to go from there. We aren't a victim of the first six chapters. We're the authors of the next set of chapters. And that can go however we want. We want to abolish racism? Then we're the ones who have to say to the Marine Corps, "You cannot tell us there are no qualified African Americans to promote to the rank of brigadier general. That's just not statistically possible."³ We're the ones who need to say to the CEO of Wells Fargo, "There are plenty of African American candidates for executive positions. Apologize and fix your company."⁴ We can make sure that any requirements to reduce carbon dioxide come with plans to increase employment for those whose jobs will be effected.

We might not like the stories of racism and climate change we've inherited. But we also inherited the stories of the Normandy landing, and the Marshall Plan and the Civil Rights movement and women's suffrage. You cannot tell me the families who lived through World War I, the 1918 Influenza and the Depression thought life was fair then either. But they kept writing, so we could pick up the story now.

The reading from Ezekiel is God reminding the Israelites living in Babylon having been exiled from their homeland after their country was destroyed in war that God wants everyone to live (Ezekiel 18:4). Instead of saying, in essence, "One strike and you're out." God is saying, "Just turn it around. Repent and the future is yours to write." We hear this reading as one of punishment, and punishment for something we didn't do. It's a story of grace. God is saying everything is possible, anything is possible, a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 18:31) are possible. But we have to repent. We have to admit that we have a role in writing the next part of the story. And we have to admit that we need God's grace. We have to admit that we have a role in turn it around and we need God's help to do so.

It's completely unfair to God that that is all we have to do. But that's the amazing deal that God is offering us. God is willing to remove the consequences of death

² E. L. Allen, "The Book of Ezekiel: Exposition," 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), 162.

³ Helene Cooper, "The Few, the Proud, the White: The Marine Corps Balks at Promoting Generals of Color," *New York Times*, August 31, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/31/us/politics/marines-race-general.html> (accessed 24 September 2020)

⁴ Hamza Shaban, "Wells Fargo CEO Apologizes after Blaming Shortage of Black Talent for Bank's Lack of Diversity," *Washington Post*, September 23, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/09/23/wells-fargo-ceo-black-employees/> (accessed 24 September 2020).

from those who have *considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed* (Ezekiel 18:28).⁵ Simply repent and ask for grace and it will be given. A new history is ours to write for such a trivial price. It's weird that God should set up such an unfair deal for Godself. But that's all that God is asking of us.

Hymn: *Thy Way Not Mine* by Horatius Bonar

[[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.](#)]

Holy God,
we give you thanks and praise for your love shown to us
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Accept the offering of our lives in union
 with Christ's offering for us,
and make us humble and obedient servants
who will work for your good pleasure;
through Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty God,
now and forever. **Amen.**

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

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

Holy God,
As we head back out into this coming week,
Help us to spot the holy ground,
where we take the coverings off our hearts
that keep the tender places from being bruised
and allow the world to reach us,
sharp and rough and cold as it is.

Help us to spot the holy ground,
and step on to it,
travelling on the path of righteousness,
Not turning away from it,
so we can make a bee-line
in too fancy shoes
for our favorite transgressions.

⁵ Timothy B. Cargal, "Proper 21, Homiletical Perspective, Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32" 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), 103.

Help us to spot the holy ground,
And notice who else was already there,
And not notice how worn and broken
Their set aside shoes are,
Because they learned something before we did
How to turn, then and live.
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: Lead Us Heavenly Father Lead Us

[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 (9/27/20)

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 Jon King's broken arm to heal quickly;
- For Kym's family in Nebraska, where Jim is in the ICU with Covid-19;
- For those caught in natural disasters, even as their destruction has moved off the front page;
- For everyone struggling to walk a road they did not choose;
- For the friends and family of June Hoff, Donna's mom, who passed away on September 20th;
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- For our nation in time of trial;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Almighty God, give me the mind of Christ:
drive away any selfish ambition,
fill me with compassion and love,
and make me a humble servant,
that all I do and all I desire may be pleasing to you; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Lord, in my accomplishments this day, make me humble; for my failures, give me consolation. In your steadfast love, uphold me, and for my sins, forgive me, that I may know your mercy and walk in the way of your salvation. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

The tax collectors and prostitutes, who were commonly known to be sinners, recognized God's righteousness in John the Baptist and Jesus, while the religious authorities (the elders) did not. Do you know of any comparable examples today?

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 +/-
August	\$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 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

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!](#)

Conserve Water

The Selectboard has urged Brookline residents [to conserve water](#). 72% of the state is experiencing "severe drought", up from 28% last week.

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:

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.

Video Discussion Group

Starting on October 18, I'd like to try a video discussion group using the Nooma videos by Rob Bell. We'll watch them together (they're 10-15 minutes long) and then we'll discuss them. Filmed beginning in 2001, released in 2013, they're meant to give church groups a jumping off place for discussion of what it means to be Christians today.

They're not church-y, but they are Scripturally based and really thought provoking. I think you'll find the discussions interesting and challenging. If you find the discussions are interesting, there are 24 videos in the series. We can certainly do another set later.

I know that some folks like to think about a video before having to discuss it, so I've included links to each of the videos, so if you'd like to watch them before seeing them with the group you can. But you certainly don't have to. We'll start each session watching them together.

I've designed the four-part series around the Patriots schedule. All the sessions will use the same Zoom link.

Sunday, October 18, 4:30-6:00pm: [Nooma 001 Rain](#)

Sunday, November 1, 4:30-6:00pm: [Nooma 018 Name](#)

Sunday, November 8, 4:30-6:00pm: [Nooma 005 Noise](#)

Sunday, November 22, 4:30-6:00pm: [Nooma 006 Kickball](#)

Zoom Meeting:

This link should get you in:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85827353669?pwd=bUYzNTZ4QIBJSm5GZG81a3NXUWZwUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 2735 3669

Passcode: 746626

Dial by your location

- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
- +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
- +1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)
- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)