



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
October 4, 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: [In Times Like These](#) by Kaleb Brasee

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship¹:

[Join Susan and Russell Haight, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: God of compassion and generous love, give us hearts to see

All: the things our eyes overlook.

Leader: Open our hearts to feel

All: the things our hands can't touch.

Leader: Open our hearts to hear

All: the still, small voice which sounds like only silence to our listening ears

Leader: Teach us to know you for what you really are

All: not flash or thunder

Leader: but love, softly spoken

All: flowing like a fountain, bathing the soul and skin

All: Amen.

¹ Today's open and closing prayers were inspired by a prayer in Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi's *Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship*, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 178.

Hymn: *Come to the Banquet* by Don Axsom

[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you someone to sing with, the words a pretty easy to figure out.]

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.](#)]

God of compassion and generous love,
you set before us every day
a bounty of good things.

We come to your banquet already dressed up
Celebrating the joys which have appeared in our lives, joys
For re-creating favorite restaurant recipes at home

For Flora, Marjorie's mom, and Janice and Elaine, and lovely afternoon
with the wind blowing the leaves over the roof, shared laughter and
memories rising to the surface, memories of dining room tables and roller
rinks,

Join with us as we feast on these joys.

Sometimes we only stagger to the banquet table
Our concerns so heavy to carry,

That we arrive disheveled and downhearted, concerns
For those of us suspicious of simplifying evil, suspicious of overestimating
its complexity,

For Jon King's broken arm to heal quickly,

For Don, Marjorie's brother-in-law, who has just entered home hospice
care

For the friends and family of Jim, Kym's in-law, who died of Covid-19,

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

For Donald and Melania Trump and all those in the White House circle
who have been diagnosed with Covid-19, may then recovery quickly,

Sooth us and help us to settle in at your banquet table.

Bring us to your feasting table, hungry for your Word,
eager to rebuild the cities you have made,
and ready to receive strangers

so that we celebrate at all times and in all places
the peace which is life in you. **Amen.**

[\[Psalm 23\]](#)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

[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: *The Table* by Chris Tomlin

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

Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:1-14

[Matthew 22:1-14 [read for you](#)]

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet." But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet." Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Hymn: *I Cannot Come*

[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with. Sometimes a song is too perfect not to put it in the service]

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

When we hear today's reading from Matthew, and we hear about the poor guy pulled off the street, slung into the banqueting hall and then tied hand and foot and tossed back out into the outer darkness because he wasn't dressed nicely enough, we think "Poor guy! Since when did clothes matter?" And that's what we're meant to think, "It's so unfair." But that's where most of us stop thinking, and that's the problem Matthew is pointing at. We stop thinking.

The common way of reading this parable is as an allegory, a story that has a hidden moral meaning. (There's some great stuff on not reading it as an allegory that has the hero of the story being the guy getting tossed out, but it will take more explaining than I can do today). Reading this parable as an allegory,² God is the king, Jesus is the king's son, the first set of guests are the pharisees and Jewish leaders who are challenging Jesus' authority in this parable, the burned city is Jerusalem which the Romans trashed to put down a rebellion in 70CE, the second set of guests, the folks who were both good and bad (Matthew 22:10), are regular people, a mix of Jews and gentiles off the streets, and the guy tossed out was one of those regular people. I'm sure that makes the entire thing clear.

In a parable, especially with a ton of characters in it, we get invited to try on all the characters, kind of like playing dress-up when we were kids and we were ballerinas or wizards. Most of us don't try on the roles of king or king's son, because we already know we're never going to have to do that gig.

But we look at the first set of guests, the ones who were too busy to come and we get it. We see their mistake. They let their daily living make them too busy to attend to things of the spirit. They let their own power and busy-ness convince them that they had no use for the king's invitation.³

We look at the second set of guests and we think, yeah, I'm much more likely to get invited to a royal banquet because of some major logistics failure. I'll be picking up groceries at Market Basket and some guy will come up to me in the parking lot. He's got to fill the local VFW hall for a wedding reception this afternoon and would I pleeeeeeeze help him out. Maybe I say "yes", maybe I say "no". But if I'm going, I'd probably head home to take a shower and put on

² Susan Grove Eastman, "Proper 23, Exegetical Perspective, Matthew 22:1-14" 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), 167.

³ Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, in *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 188.

something decent and grab at least a blank card to wish them well. Maybe slip a \$20 in there. It will be at least a free sandwich and it's a neighborly thing to do. We look at the second set of guests in the parable and we get it. We see where they did it right. They said "yes" and turned up.

But the guy who got bound hand and foot and tossed in the outer darkness. What did he do wrong? He was also out on the street, and he also said "yes" and turned up. Maybe he wasn't dressed super fancy. I don't know about your Market Baskets in New Hampshire, but in mine down in Lawrence, nobody dresses even a little fancy. So what, exactly, did he do wrong?

[Pause to let folks think about that]

Matthew knew there were people, particularly people of power and influence, who were not going to accept Jesus as the Messiah. It broke his heart, but he knew that. He pitied them. And Matthew knew there were people who would accept Jesus as the Messiah and they would work for the rest of their lives to help bring forth the kingdom of heaven. They rejoiced his heart and he dedicated himself to supporting their efforts in the face of all the people who rejected them.

But I think what frightened him, terrified him, were the people said they accepted Jesus as the Son of God and yet nothing in their lives or in their hearts changed. The people who rejected Jesus could be fought against or persuaded or ignored. But they weren't in the banqueting hall. The ones who said they had accepted Jesus, but weren't willing to let anything change in their lives, they were at the feast. And they were dead weight, dragging all the others down. For a tiny, tiny community like Matthew's, that was so dangerous. And yet there was no way to weed them out. God was the one that had to choose the good from the bad.

When we are fragile and weary, when our hearts are broken and we're grieving, we recite the 23rd Psalm. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.* We pray the Lord's Prayer, *give us this day our daily bread.* In Matthew's gospel, Jesus fed the 5,000 and then he fed the 4,000. Only a few chapters further on in Matthew's gospel, we'll hear his telling of the Last Supper, how Jesus ate with his disciples and asked them to make a ritual meal a part of the way we show that we remember him. We have to let Jesus change us, we must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," (Romans 13:14), we have to let Jesus bring us to a table with shining faces and fancy clothes that we'd been saving because we were so psyched to be at this dinner.

If having the right clothes is the way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven then I'm doomed. A lot of people are doomed. And frankly, a lot of people who can afford extremely fancy wedding garments are guaranteed entry. And that makes no sense, when we think about it. The king's complaint about the wedding garment

has to mean something else. We have to think it through. It means we have to change our lives when we come to banquet, when we accept a place at the Lord's table.

Stewardship season, when we put in our pledges for the coming year, is an opportunity to change, to show how much Jesus is changing our lives. This Stewardship season will be different because we'll be spread out. But as a church we've changed as well. In addition to our regular pledge forms, we're also offering on-line pledging, where you can set up and control the amount of your weekly or monthly pledge. On the last page of the bulletin this week, there's a form you can fill out and get to Rena either through the box at the back of the sanctuary or the Post Office. Or you can do the whole thing on-line by text or by following the link. Just click "Sign In," register for a new account, then set up your recurring pledge for next year. Talk about fancy!

This year the Stewardship campaign is slightly shorter and we are more spread apart. I'd ask, for the sanity of the folks who have to put together the budget and who will help in gathering up the pledges, please get your pledge in early. We know this is an uncertain time and completely understand if a few months from now you have to change your pledge amount. But it makes such a difference to the abundance of the meal we can offer if we have an idea of what you hope to be able to pledge.

Matthew was worried about the people who never thought about what it meant to follow Jesus. They would come to the feast that God was offering and insist that they could attend unchanged and unthinking. As his disciples, dressed in our wedding garments, we know following Jesus means we have to think, we have to change. But what a wonderful meal, what a wonderful dinner party to be invited to, full of changing, thinking people.

Hymn: *The Peace* by Graham Kendrick

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

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

God of compassion and generous love,
we give you thanks for the riches of Earth,
which sustain our lives and
which you have created for our joy.

We thank you for Jesus,
whose life, death, resurrection, and ascension
renews our strength and revives our hope.

We give you thanks for the Holy Spirit, who comes among us,
invites us to dine with each other and with you,
and keeps us in faith.

Bless these gifts for the sake of those in need
and the work of your church.

In peace, we pray our thanksgiving. **Amen.**

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

[[Let's pray together](#). Thanks, Russell & Susan, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

Leader: God of compassion and generous love, give us hearts to see as we
head back out into this coming week

All: Like the invitations we might otherwise make light of

Leader: Help open our hearts to feel the things our hands can't touch.

All: Like the generosity we might otherwise dismiss, because we are
headed to our own dinner tables

Leader: Open our hearts to hear the still, small voice which sounds like only
silence to our listening ears

All: Like the silence that comes when we say we're too busy to stop for a
minute and hear of someone's triumph in this time of pandemic

Leader: Teach us to know you for what you really are

All: a gracious host, inviting everyone to a banquet of eternal delight.

All: 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: [Jesus, Strong and Kind](#) By Jonny Robinson, Rich Thompson,
Michael Farren & Colin Buchanan**

[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 (10/4/20)

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 of us suspicious of simplifying evil, suspicious of overestimating its complexity,
- For Jon King's broken arm to heal quickly,
- For Don, Marjorie's brother-in-law, who has just entered home hospice care,
- For the friends and family of Jim, Kym's in-law, who died of Covid-19,
- For the friends and family of June Hoff, Donna's mom, who passed away on September 20th, with her family around her,
- For Donald and Melania Trump and all those in the White House circle who have been diagnosed with Covid-19, may then recovery quickly,
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

On this new day, O God, I thank you for clean air that fills my lungs, for water to drink and stream over the rocks, for light that creates life and shines on my path, for soil that grows fruits and vegetables, fashions hills and valleys, and makes homes for creatures in burrows and trees. Let me see Earth today with gratitude and feast my senses on its beauty; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

As this day is ending and I lie down to sleep, gracious God, I thank you for this day. I am mindful of the work I have done, the tasks I have not yet accomplished, the moments of blessing between me and those with whom I shared some hours, the joys of friendship and family, and all the hopes I have for tomorrow. Give me good sleep and keep me safe; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

Each day this week, ponder the attributes in Philippians 4:8 and make your own list of what to set your mind on toward living in thanksgiving. On Monday, meditate on whatever is true; Tuesday, whatever is honorable; Wednesday, just; Thursday, pure; Friday, pleasing; Saturday, commendable. On Sunday, consider what is excellent and worthy of praise.

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!](#)

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)

Brookline Community Church 2021 Pledge Form

Where is Brookline Community Church headed?

- Deepen our faith through ministry, witness, and shared learning experiences
- Share the fellowship bubbling up among us more broadly within and without
- Learn and practice invitation in traditional and unexpected ways
- Experiment with turning our faith into actions that benefit our community

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone: (____) _____ - _____

Street Address: _____

Where are you feeling called in 2021? What new things could BCC do to meet your faith and fellowship needs, especially during this time of pandemic? What talents are you willing to share in God's service?

Financial Support:

In response to God's gift of love through Christ and because I desire to support the church's ministries, I plan to give:

\$_____ each week / month / other _____ (please circle one)

or

\$_____ as a one time gift

I understand that this is an estimate of my ability to give and that if circumstances change, I can put a note in the offering or contact Treasurer Rena Duncklee to adjust my pledge.



Please return your completed pledge form by November 22nd, in the offering or by mail to:

Brookline Community Church
Attn: Treasurer, PO Box 507, Brookline, NH 03033

Pledge On-line:

If you would like to set up and control the amount of your weekly or monthly pledge, you can do so [on-line](#). Just click "Sign In" and then "Register for a New Account" and you can set up your recurring pledge for next year. (If you'd rather set up your pledge via text, text "GIVE" to +16035064455. You'll get a link back, which you can use to sign in and register for a new account, set your PIN and set up your pledge)