



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
October 25, 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: [Tree](#) by Justin Rizzo

[A piece to help you get settled for worship. Feel free to sing along]

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.

Centering Ourselves for Worship¹:

[Join Lindsey, Maddie, Kier and Cora Shaklee, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: This is the way I play, says the woman on the bench — I watch
chipmunks, the blue heron and goldfish, until on the inside

All: I'm all scamper, stalk and glitter-swim.

¹ Today's open and closing prayers were inspired by Maren Tirabassi's "An inquiry about play at the assisted living facility, October 9, 2020," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted October 9, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/10/09/an-inquiry-about-play-at-the-assisted-living-facility/> (accessed October 19, 2020).

Leader: This is the way I play, says the man who forgets — I lose at bingo because I'm laughing at a joke. I get a strike in foam rubber bowling. I'm glad when someone reminds me it's not baseball.

All: I dance to swing band records with my imaginary wife in my arms.

Leader: This is the way I play, says the woman with hearing loss – black mittens and soft snow.

All: The first one with twenty snowflakes raise your hand.

Leader: This is the way I play, says the licensed nursing assistant – I guess who won't be able to sleep tonight —

All: perhaps I will listen to a sweet old story.

Leader: This is the way I play, says Jesus in the face of the Pharisees – I offer truth that stares people in the face.

All: but not everyone gets that it's more than a word game. Amen.

Leader: Amen

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

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

For the sake of all that is needed by Earth, its people,
and our churches,
let us pray, saying,
Holy God, hear our prayer.

For people of faith in every land, in every religion,
and in every home,
Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For world leaders, peacekeepers,
diplomats, and government workers,
Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For those lifted up with joy,

For the new technology in worship helping to keep us all on the same page

For the Wycliffe Bible Translators, particularly the Crossman family, for
their work and their thanks for our support.

For the grace to realize we can let go of the baggage that is keeping us
from God.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For those weighed down with concerns,

For Lata, Lisa's housemate, who had emergency gallbladder surgery

For the friends & family of Don, Marjorie's brother-in-law, who passed away in hospice care at home.

For the 545 children separated from their families at the U.S. border who cannot be reunited

For the struggle to bring our relationships with God, neighbor and self into proper alignment.

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For trees and plants, creatures large and small,

for pets and working animals,

for oceans, winds, and soil,

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For farmers in this harvest time,

for those who fish and hunt,

for those who ship and store what is gathered,

and for those who cook and serve,

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For children in school, teachers, and parents,

and for those who have no schools,

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For all else the church is concerned with on this day . . .

*[silence for the assembly members to speak aloud
or silently their petitions],*

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

For all that we have not named but which you know, O Lord,

we trust that you will hear our prayer

in the name of Christ Jesus, 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 or call/text (978) 494-6953.]

Hymn: *Be Like A Tree*

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

Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:34-46

[Matthew 22:34-46 [read for you](#)]

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’ ”?

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

The psalm for today is Psalm 1. It’s short, but I’m only going to read the first bit of it.

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

Yifan found [a great video to go with that psalm](#), which you might check out. I thought it was cleverly done.

I just love that image of trees planted by streams of water. I have an image of roots sunk deep, and fruit returning season after season. If I think of myself as a tree, part of the water that nourishes me is my church family. Part of it is my handwork. Part of it are the books I read (I just finished a couple of fun alternate history/sci fi books in [Kowal’s Lady Astronaut series](#)). Part of it is the news. If I knew about [the wildfires in California](#) or about [the protests in Belarus](#), I feel like I

understood the world better. I can better figure out my place in it. And frankly the [new panda cub at the Washington Zoo](#) is pretty cute.

But in these last couple of weeks before the election, I feel like there are more and more people just playing word games. And playing them in bad faith. And I am tired of trying to figure out what message they're sending me with their code words and outrage. And they're not nourishing me. They're taking water away from my roots, they're stealing the fruits of calm and laughter I've managed to grow in this crazy time.

In today's reading, the authorities in Jerusalem were not happy about Jesus of Nazareth showing up for the Passover celebration. They were especially not happy about the crowds loving him so much. So a bunch of different groups took a run at him, trying to use his words against him. And in doing so, they play word games with him. What commandment is the greatest? There's only one answer to that: Love God. And since that was what the Pharisees said they were doing when they were making so many ordinary people's lives miserable by insisting on following all the Laws of Moses to the letter,² well, once Jesus said Love God, they had him under control.

The way Jesus highlights how entwined the two kinds of love are is a great answer. You can't love God and make everyone around you miserable. Loving your neighbor is a way of loving God. Your love of God has to show up in your love of neighbor. So Jesus beats them at their own game and slips out of their control.

Then Jesus has a turn and asks them about the Messiah. On one level, he's forcing them to acknowledge that saying the Messiah is the Son of David is way too small for what the Messiah really is. The Messiah is the Son of God and as such is much bigger than David ever was. And even David acknowledged that. You could look at it in one way and say it's Jesus beathing the Pharisees at their own game.³ Or you can just see them not acknowledging that they preferred to have a small-scale version of the Messiah that was easier to control.

So much of today's reading is about struggling for control: who's in control of Jerusalem, who's in control of the Temple, who's in control of Jesus, who's in control of God's laws, who's in control of what words are used to describe what's going on. And the tighter the authorities try to grasp for that control, the more obvious it becomes that they don't have control over anything.

² Tim Beach-Verhey, "Proper 25, Theological Perspective, Matthew 22:34-46" 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), 214.

³ Charles B. Cousar, "Proper 25: Matthew 22:34-46" in *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV—Year A*, ed. Walter Brueggemann et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 541-543.

Because you can't control the love of God. The love we have for God, the love of God we discover by loving our neighbors is all a pale, thin shadow of the love that God has for us. We have this idea that love is easy, and if it's not easy, then it's not love.

Speaking just for myself, I am not easy to love. I can have a sharp tongue and be too judgmental and overly focused on details and getting things done. I do love words and humor and far too often I pursue a joke at the expense of someone's feelings. I curse too often and I value cleverness way more than I should. Honestly, there are days when I struggle to be inside myself. So it is a marvel to me that God loves me, let alone loves me so much. God gives me a world to run around in where I can imagine I have all sorts of control that I don't have, that somehow knowing about wildfires, and protests in Minsk and a panda cub in D.C. give me control over this crazy world. When it is just patently, flamingly obvious that it is completely beyond my control. And that the illusion of control makes me more likely to forget about God's love for me in favor of my own regard for myself.⁴

And God loves me so much that God gives me neighbors whom, if I actually get into loving relationship with them, will join with me to control the world. As neighbors we can come to solutions about climate change and controlling the virus and racism and whatever else is on our list. But first we need to do all the hard work of loving each other, despite our opposition on wearing masks, or burning fossil fuels, or whether black lives matter. That kind of love, the kind of love that doggedly, day after day, works on the systemic problems of this world, is not easy. It doesn't show up in word games, played to see how many people can be entrapped in some kind of pointless argument.

That kind of love, that gives up the fantasy of having control in order to make space in this world for God's love to show up more vividly, that kind of love is really, really hard. But that is the kind of love that waters all our roots, lets all of us bear fruit. And it is the kind of love that God is offering us and asking us to show, instead of playing word games that cause our roots to shrivel and our fruit to wither. So play with love, not with words. You won't have more control, but you'll care less about the control you never had anyway. Amen.

Hymn: *Love the Lord Your God*

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

⁴ Walter Brueggemann, "The First Great Commandment." *Journal for Preachers* 34, no. 4 (2011): 11.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

With thanksgiving for
the bounty of this earth,
the work we have been given to do,
the joy of sharing so that others may also live,
we gather our gifts at this time,
loving our neighbors as ourselves.

We thank you, O Holy God, for the ways in which your
people have cared for each of us.
We thank you for the ability to give for the sake of others.
We ask your blessing on these gifts
that through them the needs of this world can be met.
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Hymn: *Take Delight in the Lord*

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

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

[\[Let's pray together.\]](#) Thanks, Lindsey, Maddie, Kier & Cora, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

Leader: We all play in different ways, but all of us need some time to play in this coming week.

All: Help us to be playful in ways that show the love of God we have in our hearts.

Leader: Sometimes the best ways to love our neighbors is to not be so serious in this anxious, crazy making time which is this coming week.

All: Help us to show the creativity and joy we find in loving our neighbors, especially when they least expect it.

Leader: In this coming week, even as we play to let off steam and find a lighter moment in all the gloom,

All: Help us to live our lives committed to the light of the Son of God.

Leader: This is the way we play. Amen.

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: [I Shall Not Be Moved](#) by Daniel Lovett

[No lyrics, but 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 (10/25/20)

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 Lata, Lisa's housemate, who had emergency gallbladder surgery
- For the friends & family of Don, Marjorie's brother-in-law, who passed away in hospice care at home.
- For the 545 children separated from their families at the U.S. border who cannot be reunited
- For the struggle to bring our relationships with God, neighbor and self into proper alignment.
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

This morning, as I rise, O God, I hear the sounds of your world awaking, and I give you thanks for another day. Bless your people this morning, at noon, in the afternoon, and in the evening with mercy and loving-kindness. Show us every hour the way to love each other. Help me to see in any conflicts how to grow in faith through the struggle for peace with my family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and strangers; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

As I lie down to sleep tonight, O God, I give you thanks for this day so full of surprises and joys. My muscles and bones are weary, and I long for renewal and quiet. Because you are the One in whom I have complete rest, I lean into your arms at this hour. Guard and keep your servant so that through the night, I may grow strong. Wake me in the morning with resolve to love my neighbors and to love myself, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

Where has God seemed to lead you to the edge of your "promised land" and then appeared to be holding you back from entering? What could this be saying about God? What effect could this have on your faith?

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/?ref=astore) 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 +/-
September	\$74,646	\$64,492	\$10,154

No Christmas Faire in 2020

But we are doing some fundraising to help replace the money it generates. We have delicious homemade strawberry and apricot jam that is available for sale now until it's gone (\$5/jar).

We have a Firepit Raffle "Basket" that we will be selling tickets for starting Sunday, Oct. 18 (if you can help sell some tickets that would be great!). Tickets are 1/\$5 or 5/\$20. One or two sale items and one or two other raffle items may be added soon. The raffle ticket drawing will be held on Sunday, December 6th. Please [email carolcherian@gmail.com](mailto:carolcherian@gmail.com) if you have any questions or are interested in helping out.

Take Home Meal: Buffalo Mac and Cheese (with whoopie pies!)

This month we're offering Buffalo Mac and Cheese. And for a little bit more, you can add in dessert, whoopie pies! Get a whole home-made meal ready to enjoy, with no clean up! Such a treat!

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

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)