



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
November 22, 2020
Reign of Christ Sunday

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: [All Creatures of Our God and King](#) by Brigham Welch & Michael Hardey, featuring Hannah Jane

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship¹:

[Join Cindy Perkins & Jill Aitken, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: I pause (breathe in and out) and thank you for this day. For the challenges, the emotions, the struggle. For in all this, I grow closer to you, true Ruler of the World.

All: I pause (breathe in and out) and ask that in the darkness, I see your light and in my loneliness, I feel your strength, O King of Kings.

¹ Today's open and closing prayers were inspired by Joanne McRae's prayer *A Devotional for Times of Anxiety and Depression* in "Guest Post — R. Matthew Stevens," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted April 7, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/04/07/11950/> (accessed November 16, 2020).

Leader: I pause (breathe in and out) and remember that today, As in days before, I have survived. When I've wanted to run, I've stayed. When I wanted to hide, I've faced the day. You were at my side the whole time, Ruler of All.

All: I pause (breathe in and out) and ask for forgiveness for the days I falter and fear takes over. I ask for compassion and love when I'm unable to give those to myself, O Prince of Peace.

Leader: I pause (breathe in and out) and resolve to love myself more tomorrow. And always feel your spirit surround me in safety, Mighty King.

All: I pause (breathe in and out) and rest in the arms of the Shepherd King. Amen

Hymn: *Make Me a Servant* by the Marantha Singers

[[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.](#)]

Through Jesus Christ, God has shown us
the sovereignty of divine love
in compassion for the least, the lost, and the lonely.
Therefore, we pray, saying,
Compassionate Lord, receive our prayer.

God, we live in a world of plenty
in which the poor struggle for daily bread.
We pray for those who lack the basic necessities of life
and those who willingly share the resources you have given.
Correct those who hoard resources
out of anxiety, ignorance, or selfishness.
Open their eyes to your presence among the poor of the world
and free them for joyful giving.
For the poor, the benevolent, and the hard-of-heart,
Compassionate Lord, **receive our prayer.**

God, you sing with us when we are lifted up with joy.
We pray for those who are singing this week,
For the pleasure (and distraction) of helping the Take Home Meal crew
For spending time (outside) with our kids at whatever age
For Henry's 3rd birthday, Linda & Bob's grandson
For having a Covid Full House in the sanctuary last week, where anyone
else who showed up was going to have to sit in the balcony.
For realizing that today is the day you can declare peace in your own
conflicts
For the promise of peace in the aftermath of conflict, even if that means
more work

For those whose joys are lifting them up,
Compassionate Lord, **receive our prayer.**

God, you hear the cry of all who are weighed down with concerns.
Heal those who are sick in body, mind, or spirit.
Comfort them in their need and help those
who care for them.

We also pray for those who abandon the sick
and suffering out of fear.

Teach us to serve our sisters and brothers
and to share the burden of disease of body, mind, and heart.

We pray for those bowing under the weight of their concerns

For Dorothy Lane, with a recent diagnosis of breast cancer, which was
hopefully caught early

For the Friends and Family of Earl Bosquet, whom we laid to rest last week

For Joe, Susan's cousin, facing a tough cardiac surgery, may the family
who surrounds him help speed his healing

For war in any form, between nations, between people, within ourselves

For people who don't feel loved, even when surrounded by people who
love them

For the sick and those in distress, for those who care for them
and those who are afraid to offer fellowship to them
Compassionate Lord, **receive our prayer.**

God, Jesus our Lord was a prisoner of Rome
before his execution,
and he instructed his disciples to visit those in prison.
We pray for those who are incarcerated:
for those who are guilty of crime
and for those who may be unjustly imprisoned.
Save the lost, reprove the haughty, liberate the captive,
and let your disciples be a sign of your forgiving,
liberating love.

We also pray for those who work in prisons,
that they may respect the humanity
of the women and men they guard
and not be overwhelmed by the moral dangers
of their employment.

For prisoners, for those who minister to them,
and for those who guard them,
Compassionate Lord, **receive our prayer.**

Almighty God, confirm our prayer
with the dedication of our lives to ministry;
in the name of Jesus Christ,
by the power of your Holy Spirit. **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: *Go Light Your World* by Chris Rice

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

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 34:20-24

[Ezekiel 34:20-24 [read for you](#)]

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

[Matthew 25:31-46 [read for you](#)]

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

Today is the day we’re planning to wrap up Stewardship for this year. Hopefully, you’ve gotten your pledge forms in and Rena is exhausted from getting all the paperwork sorted out. But on the off chance that there are one or two of you with good intentions that haven’t quite made it to the post office, I’ll ask you to send your forms in as soon as you can.

This is the part where you wait for me to explain how your pledge makes it possible for us to offer food and drink or clothing, to offer healing and company and welcome. And it does. But you know that already. Plus I’m not going there, because I don’t think that’s the point of what Jesus is saying.

I do think Jesus is saying there will be an accounting. But look at what happens in that moment of judgment. The sheep are surprised. *Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?* (Matthew 25:37). What they did, they did because it was the right thing to do, that's just the kind of people that they are. They didn't do it because they were looking to run up the points on some final scoreboard in the throne room of the King. The moment of judgment comes and the righteous are surprised.

The moment of judgment comes and the goats are surprised too, as they head to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). *Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?* (Matthew 25:44) Either they thought they had ministered to the Son of Man (or they feel they never got the opportunity to do so), they thought they had done enough or that their religious response was enough, they didn't need to do any of the hands-on work in the world.²

I think Jesus' point here is that whatever you're doing in this world is what you're doing. Do it with the intention of scoring cosmic brownie points and you undermine the action's ability to contribute to your own salvation. Which isn't surprising in a way. Because we have long argued that salvation comes through grace, through Jesus' loving gift to us. Salvation comes unearned and unexpected and we're not able to do anything to make it happen.

I think we can all come up with examples where we just decided to see Jesus in some other person. They left home without their wallet or they just needed to look in the dairy case and now they're ahead of you in line or they hadn't had their coffee when they sent that email. We don't do it for gain or recognition. We do it because it's the right thing to do. And, yes, because we're disciples of Jesus Christ and that's what we're called to do.

The thing is that most of us have a harder time coming up with examples where we went the other way. In Ezekiel, God tells us God has to step in *because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide* (Ezekiel 34:21). We can probably come up with examples when we were pushed with flank and shoulder, but not when we did the pushing. In that, we are like the goats in the parable from Matthew. We weren't aware we were doing it, but we did it.

That's what we're asking for your pledge for. So the church can reach out to organizations who can help us with our blind spots. Recovering addicts, abused women, homeless vets, these are just some of the folks we help through the church. I personally don't have a lot of contact with any of those folks in my daily life. Honestly, I'm more likely to do something unkind, say something tactless,

² Dan O. Via, Jr., "Ethical Responsibility and Human Wholeness in Matthew 25:31-46." *Harvard Theological Review* 80, no. 1 (1987): 98-99.

out of ignorance. I need someone to bring me into contact with them. I need someone to help teach me what assumptions I'm making. I need an Outreach team to take a lunch to the Transfer Station at every Senior Luncheon so that I never, ever take those guys for granted. By supporting the church, you're creating more opportunities to connect with folks you don't ordinarily connect with.

And because this is a community made up of the disciples of Jesus Christ, we've been taught to ask, "Who's not here? Who's missing? Who have we pushed with flank and shoulder, butted out of the way? What portion of God's flock has been scattered and how can we make it right?" It matters if someone is missing because they might need our help, our food and drink, our clothes, healing, visiting and welcome. It might also matter because we might need their help. Because part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is understanding that sometimes you're the shepherd and sometimes you're the sheep.³ When part of the flock is scattered, someone isn't getting taken care of properly. And sometimes that someone is you.

So fill out your pledge card and get it turned in. Not because it will boost your score in the great throne room of the King. But because no one ever has enough opportunities to care for the least of these, the ones Jesus called his own. And because there are plenty of days when you are the least of these, and a good strong flock with lots of loving shepherds who can turn up with Three Cheese Stuffed Shells and Buffalo Chicken Dip is the best place to be.

Hymn: *Do Something* by Matthew West

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

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

Holy God, use us, and the gifts we bring,
to feed the hungry, clothe the naked,
and honor your presence in all people;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn: *Dream Small* by Josh Wilson

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

³ Guy Sayles, "Preaching the texts for ordinary time." *Journal for Preachers* 37, no. 4 (2014): 5.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

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

Leader: I pause (breathe in and out) and remember that you are the real ruler of this world.

All: I pause (breathe in and out) and feel the strength of a true King, who works for the flourishing of everyone

Leader: I pause (breathe in and out) and remind myself that all the powers and principalities will bow to your loving presence, and the hungry and the naked and the sick and imprisoned will be cared for.

All: I pause (breathe in and out) and prepare myself to return to the world outside your sanctuary, which may not realize there is so much more than the political divisions which are causing such struggle at the moment.

Leader: I pause (breathe in and out) and resolve to share the love you have given me, the least of your children, with my neighbors.

All: I pause (breathe in and out) and rest in the arms of the Shepherd King. Amen

[CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: # 839 "God Be With You Till We Meet Again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again."](#)

[The Music Ministry crew made this bit of video for us, so we could all sing together, with each other and our former selves!]

Postlude: [The Thanksgiving Song](#) by Ben Rector

[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 (11/22/20)

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, Rev. Tom Atherton, June Hoff.
- 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 Dorothy Lane, with a recent diagnosis of breast cancer, which was hopefully caught early
- For the Friends and Family of Earl Bosquet, whom we laid to rest last week
- For Joe, Susan's cousin, facing a tough cardiac surgery, may the family who surrounds him help speed his healing
- For war in any form, between nations, between people, within ourselves
- For people who don't feel loved, even when surrounded by people who love them
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Almighty God, reveal to me the greatness of your power, that I may see your presence among the lowly and the lost and know the authority and sovereignty of your love in Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is also our humble brother. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Lord Jesus,

when did I see you hungry?

When did I see you thirsty?

When did I welcome you, or clothe you, or take care of you, or visit you?

Have I ignored your claim upon my time, my attention, my resources?

Open my eyes;

melt my heart;

enlighten my understanding.

Let me see you in the world, welcome you as my brother, and serve you as my Lord, with the family you acknowledge as your own: the poor, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What sort of power is manifest in the reign of Jesus Christ? What does it mean to claim that Christ is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” or that God has “put all things under his feet” (Eph. 1:21, 22)?

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 +/-
October	77,968	\$70,830	\$7,137

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.

Christmas Blues Service

Jazz Sanctuary service at First Congregational Church, Concord will offer a Blues Christmas service for this year which has so many of singing the Blues. It will premiere on [their YouTube channel](#) on November 15th, and be available after that to stream and enjoy.

Holiday Lights Extravaganza in Brookline on December 12th

The Brookline Women's Club and Parent Teacher Organization, with the support of Local Businesses and Members of the Community, have joined forces to present a socially distant Holiday Lights Display. Together, homes and store fronts, will light up the chilly air with festive lights and holiday themed displays, for all of our local families to drive by and enjoy for free!

Want your display to be included in the Extravaganza? Visit <https://bwc-nh.weebly.com/holiday-lights-extravaganza.html> or Brookline, NH PTO facebook page to sign up!

Salvation Army Bell Ringing in Milford on December weekends

The Milford UMC has invited other area churches to help cover the Salvation Army Bell Ringing in Milford this year. 70% of the funds raised stay local (Milford-Mont Vernon-Wilton) with the remaining funds going toward the SA overhead and poorer regions.

They're looking for help on weekends in December. If you're interested in a four hour shift, please email Rev. Dr. John Whitley (pastor@milfordumc.org) by 11/22

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:

Cooking Oil	Bread
BBQ Sauce	Canned Chicken
Laundry Detergent	Canned Ham
Bleach	Paper Towels
Vinegar	Tissues
Coffee	Sandwich Bags (and other zipper bags)
Peanut Butter Crackers	Trash Bags
Pudding (cups or mix)	Baked Beans
Butter/Margarine	

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)