



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
November 29, 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: [The Hope Candle](#) by The Eden Symphony Orchestra

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

Centering Ourselves for Worship¹:

[Join Sanjay Cherian and Candy Tiner, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: Let us remember the words of Mary, as she offered her magnificent song of praise

All: And Mary said,

¹ Today's open and closing prayers were inspired Mary's Song of Praise or *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55 and Sherri Dobbs Johnson, *The Africana Worship Book for Year B*, (Discipleship Resources, 2007, p. 25-26.) that appeared as the Advent prayer on the UMC's Discipleship Resources page for First Sunday of Advent, Year B - Liturgical Resources, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/companys-coming/first-sunday-of-advent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/first-sunday-of-advent-year-b-liturgical-resources> (accessed 16 November 2020).

Leader: And like all new parents, she didn't really know what she was getting into, but she was hopeful

**All: And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.**

Leader: Oh the power of the Baby! Make us angels gathering up coworkers, train-workers, house-workers, yard-workers, body-workers, taxi-workers, garbage-workers, factory-workers, classroom-workers, building-workers, and food-workers to behold the miracle child who can take our spiritual thirst away forever.

**All: And Mary said, Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.**

Leader: O the power of the Baby! Take this chip off our shoulder, help us forget the wrong done to us; make disappointment and rejection disappear; melt them like intense sun melts the snow. Take away the isolation of staying inside of ourselves, separated from the world.

All: And Mary said so many things. Let us ponder the power of the Baby in our hearts. Amen.

Lighting the Advent Wreath²

Several years ago Cláudio Carvalhaes, professor of worship at Union Theological Seminary, suggested that we lament before we light – naming those things which oppose or diminish hope, peace, joy and love. We name them and then claim the power of that light over them. Today's Advent wreath lighter is Rena Duncklee. [Let us bring light to the darkness.](#)

Leader: In our homes, we gather around wreaths to pray our lost hopes, broken peace, limited joys, and love so hard to find and share, in this season of coronavirus. We affirm that our candles mean we claim the power to call this season Advent when God's light comes into the world and nothing can overcome it.

Lighter: I light the candle of hope in the face of not having Thanksgiving with me family.

Emmanuel, God be with us, in the week to come, lighting hope on the wick of our lives so that we may shine on our world. Amen

Leader: God's hope shines on hopelessness, and brightens the path toward peace.

² The advent wreath lighting liturgy was inspired by Maren Tirabassi's "An Advent Wreath Ceremony for 2020," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted October 30, 2020, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2020/10/30/13204/> (accessed November 14, 2020).

Hymn: Advent Wreath Prayers – Week 1 by Dave Frincke

[[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.](#)]

God of power and glory,
we remember your awesome deeds across the ages—
the times you saved us and brought us home.
Yet, we also remember times
when we felt alone and afraid.
O God, we are your people,
the work of your hand.
Look upon us with your shining face,
especially in the time of need.

We pray for those who look to you for healing
and hope . . .

those who are sick or recuperating from
illness and injury . . .

those who are lonely and need companionship
and care . . .

those for whom the holidays bring sorrow or pain . . .

those whose deep sadness overshadows joy.

We pray for all those weighed down by concern

Laura, Donna's cousin, who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 and now
also has pneumonia

For Luca, Amy's nephew, who's going through a tough patch with his
treatment

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

For Janet, Carol's colleague, whose sister passed away the day before
Thanksgiving,

For Amy, whose husband and son had positive Covid tests and she's not
feeling so great either.

Let your face shine upon us, O God.

We pray for those lifted up by joy
For the successful teamwork of another Take Home Meal
For the joy of sailing into Thanksgiving week, with a couple of days off

Let us recognize something of you in the shining faces
Of those who have joys in their lives.

Renew the spirit of a world grown weary
with waiting and hoping.
Especially we pray for wars to end,
for hunger and poverty to be crowded out by abundance.
And we pray, too, for the church
because we also grow weary in our waiting and watching
for your power and glory to be made known.
Grant us clarity, passion, and true fellowship
so that we are awake to your presence.

Let your face shine upon the church
and all this weary world, we pray;
in the name of the One born in a manger
and coming again on clouds of glory. 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: *Advent Song (O Come Emmanuel)* by New Scottish Hymns Band
[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

[Isaiah 64:1-9 [read for you](#)]

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;

because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Reflection on the Scripture:

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

During this Advent that is going to be different from any other we keep or have kept in our lifetimes, I thought we might explore our connection with the book of Isaiah. Written at three different times: in exile, when news that they were allowed to go back to life as they knew it arrived, when they were back to the new normal and not finding it as easy as they had hoped, the book of Isaiah offers us an opportunity to look at our own lives and our own faith decide how we want to live into the future God offers while acknowledging what has brought us to this moment.

Today's reading from Isaiah is a prayer. It starts by looking back to the past, when God was so much more present in the world. The mountains quaked (Isaiah 64:1), the heavens were torn open (Isaiah 64:1). And we could sit together around a Thanksgiving table with folks who had just driven in. We could go to the Hollywood blockbuster that was opening in 500 theaters on Thanksgiving weekend. The question was whether the turkey was going to fit in the oven, not what we were going to do with all the leftovers. Especially when our brother-in-law didn't take the carcass back to his house to make soup. The prayer looks back to the past, we look back to the past, and we ask God to remember those times with us. The prayer looks back to the past even if it wasn't perfect, or rather, even though it was scary enough that people trembled in public (Isaiah 64:2).

Then the prayer does some introspection. The people praying the prayer aren't perfect either. They're sinners. They've made the world an unfit place for God to

come to visit.³ It feels like God has been absent from the world and that might be part of how they slid off the straight and narrow. In English and Greek, a portion of the blame is laid squarely on God. In Hebrew, it's more circumspect.⁴ But for whatever reason things have fallen apart, they've definitely fallen apart. Life is a mess. A big, hot mess. And there is no way out of blind alley leading to a dead end that they have fallen into. Political divisions, economic inequality, climate catastrophe. Whatever they called it, whatever we call it, we get it. We're in a terrible mess. One we made. One we can't get out of. One we need to get out of if we're going to have a future worth leaving to our kids.

The book of Isaiah looks at the political history of their country and asks a question about the future, given the past. This invasion here by that king then was met with this response over there. Then that guy died and his sons couldn't hold the kingdom together so it fell apart. But another king with other sons came and filled the void and he was a tough son of gun who liked to take names and conquer territory. And before you knew it, there was Jerusalem surrounded and then destroyed. And throughout all that, the kings of Israel tried A, B and C to keep the invaders out. It's a long telling and re-telling of conquest and defeat. Events that seemed like minor footnotes turn out to be hinges of history, but they could only tell that in retrospect. Decisions that tore the court in Jerusalem apart ended up not mattering much at all. Who Israel is at the end of all that history has completely changed from who they were at the beginning of it.

The book of Isaiah looks at all that history and turmoil and change and says, "and yet."⁵ And yet, God was with us the whole way. And yet, whatever humans said or did in every convulsion from way back then to right here and now, whatever humans said, that was not the last word. God has the last word.⁶ And yet, for all the mistakes we've made that have led to this blind alley, to this dead end, to this history that is petering out like a creek in the desert, and yet for all that, God is still with us. And God can do what God has done before, many times. God can reach into history and provide a new future.

That knowledge, that the former things of this world matter, but that the God of Israel can sever the connection, can give the people of Israel a new start, that is the heart of the book of Isaiah and heart of the prayer we read from Isaiah today. *Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand* (Isaiah 64:8). God can step in like a loving parent with

³ Walter Brueggemann, "First Sunday of Advent: Isaiah 64:1-9" in *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV—Year B*, ed. Walter Brueggemann et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 3.

⁴ Kristin J. Wendland, "First Reading: Commentary on Isaiah 64:1-9", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for November 30, 2014, First Sunday of Advent", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=30147%2C30149%2C30151%2C30150> (accessed 23 November 2020).

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 234.

⁶ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 2.

kids who have messed up but learned their lessons. God can step in like a potter and continue to shape the creation that is coming into being.⁷

We may be looking back to the past and wishing the present were more like that. We may be running around in the present, being large and in charge, trying to control the world with a rampaging virus in it as if that were even remotely possible. And the book of the Isaiah, the prayer from Isaiah says to us, “and yet”. Are we willing to stop, take a deep breath, acknowledge our own sins, our own iniquities, then say “and yet” and remember that the future comes from God?⁸

Do you hear the echo of the “and yet” from Isaiah in the prayer we pray all the time? “Father” we say. Give us a future that has daily bread in it. Give us a future that has forgiveness for trespasses. Give us a future where we are delivered from evil. We will acknowledge our past, but we ask for a future which is not connected to it. Because from long ago, you are our Father and we are your people. When we settle ourselves in prayer, we remember where our future comes from. Not from the past. It comes from the “and yet” God has offered us from the beginning of the world. We pray that God remembers that too.

So let us pray together...

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.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

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

Faithful God,
we thank you that Christ is being revealed
in every time and place
until he comes again in the fullness of glory.
Strengthen our testimony and spiritual gifts;
increase generosity in us, we pray,
as we wait for the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn: *Faithful God* by Laura Story

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

⁷ Scott Bader-Saye, “First Sunday of Advent, Theological Perspective, Isaiah 64:1-9” in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B, Volume 1*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 6.

⁸ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 237-238.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

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

Leader: Let us remember the words of Mary and the power of the Baby. And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

All: We're headed toward an ending, our own and the ending of the world. But Mary and her baby call us to head in a new direction. Whatever path we were on before, we're now headed for Bethlehem and then Jerusalem.

Leader: And Mary said, Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

All: O the power of the Baby! Let us give God something to work with, something to steer us off the course we were on and head us in that new direction. Let us open ourselves to God pointing us away from iniquity and toward that new beginning that the Baby offers us.

Leader: And Mary said so many things. As we head back out into the coming week, let us ponder the power of the Baby in our hearts.

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: [Advent Song \(Our God Has Come\)](#) by Awaken Worship

[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 (11/29/20)

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, Barbara Thaxter.
- 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;
- Laura, Donna's cousin, who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 and now also has pneumonia
- For Luca, Amy's nephew, who's going through a tough patch with his treatment
- For the Friends and Family of Earl Bosquet, whom we laid to rest recently
- For Janet, Carol's colleague, whose sister passed away the day before Thanksgiving,
- For Amy, whose husband and son had positive Covid tests and she's not feeling so great either.
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Thank you, God, for the gift of life today. I give thanks that your face shines upon me for you are my salvation. Lead me like a shepherd through this day. Strengthen me for whatever lies ahead. Grant me the spiritual gifts of peace, patience, kindness, and gentleness, for I want to show your love, in word and deed, to others. In Christ's name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Though you have told us to keep awake, O God, you have also blessed us with rest and sleep. Grant me such rest in the hours ahead that I awaken with eager longing for a new day, ready for you to be revealed in mundane moments and ordinary encounters. By your grace prepare me, whether awake or asleep, to greet you: in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn. All times are in your hands, and I, too, am in your hands, faithful God. In Jesus' name I rest and pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

The weeks leading to Christmas are often filled with much activity. Along with work, school, and church responsibilities, there are special holiday festivities to which we will attend. Staying "awake," as Mark 13:24–37 stresses, may not be the problem—in fact, we may feel there are not enough hours in the day! Yet, this reading from Mark counsels us to be awake to, to pay attention to, what is most needful for our well-being and the well-being of the world: God's presence, God's appearing among us. Here at the beginning of Advent, how will you "keep alert" for God in the midst of so many responsibilities and distractions?

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

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 www.bwc-nh.weebly.com or Brookline, NH PTO facebook page to sign up!

Spreading the Christmas Spirit (& Helping Santa on his way)

After a tough year, folks are trying to safely share a little sparkle of magic, hope & togetherness. On Christmas Eve, at 6:00pm, head outside with a bell and ring it for two minutes. We'll be doing something together (and yet apart), and making sure Santa knows where to head next. Listen for the bells across your community. If someone would like to ring the church bell, let Rev. Cath know and we'll make the logistics are covered.

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.

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)