

*Brookline Community Church*  
*January 24, 2021*  
*Reverend Catherine A. Merrill, Minister*



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: [Come, Follow Me](#) by Paul Cardall**

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

**Centering Ourselves for Worship:<sup>1</sup>**

[Join Howard Clements, today's lay leader, [in our centering prayer](#).]

And here we are, in this time of winter,  
worn by seasons, worn by pandemics  
of disease, distress, anger and fear.  
We are a people made for relationship  
too often separated and distanced.

We are a people of love,  
too often missing the mark,  
too often exposed to anger.

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<sup>1</sup> Today's Centering Prayer and Prayer to Send Us Back out into the World were inspired by Pastor Tom Atkins of the Rupert United Methodist Church, Rupert VT who offered the *UMC's Daily Prayer during this COVID-19 Crisis* on December 2, 2020.

We are a people who plan,  
in a time where there are no plans, only constant change,  
season after season of uncertainty.

We have felt loss. And there is more ahead.  
We cannot see the end of it.  
And we are tired.  
We are worn beyond our own capacity.

And so we call on you. Not for the first time.  
Not for the last.  
We call on you, in need of the strength only you can give us.  
In need of patience,  
hungry for confidence and hope  
that only you can bring. Only you.  
For you are God. And we are not.

This we know:  
You are in this time Lord. Let us see you.  
You are in this time Lord. Help us trust you.  
You are in this time, give us strength  
to be your people, in the midst of it all.  
Fish us up from the depths where we are drowning  
even now, Lord.  
Especially  
Now.

Amen.

### **Hymn: *Come Follow Me***

[\[Click here\]](#) 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 and Concerns:**

[Rev. Cath [sharing our joys and concerns.](#)]

God of new visions,  
we pray for people highly placed in power,  
that they may focus their eyes on you.  
And we pray for the lowly victims of power,  
that they may also focus their eyes on you.

We pray for those lifted up with joys,  
For the NH National Guard, for being so efficient in administering Covid-19 vaccines to so many different people

A successful take-home meal day, making lots of meals (and opening lots of cans to get there!)

For Jim and Marie, Peter's friends, who are both home from the hospital after Covid. Still on oxygen, and with more recovery to come, but home.

For watching our kids grow into the lessons we offered them, seeing them become adults in unexpected ways

Like the fisherman after a long wait,  
Who finally lands the big one,  
Let us be lifted up with joy like that.

We pray for those weighed down with concerns,

For the friends and family of Dave Larkin, who lost his battle with cancer on Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.

For Joel, Susan's relative, who is hospitalized with Covid and pneumonia and is on a ventilator

For Maureen, Barbara's relative, who was just diagnosed with advanced colorectal cancer

For heart broken people, however their hearts were broken

For Robs, Cath's friend, who had a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis come out of the blue

For the challenges of bringing truth and love together in faithful witness

For Carol's mom and brother, now that her mom is home from the hospital

For Peter's work friends, who are dealing with Covid for the second time.

For peace in the remaining transition of power in our federal and state capitals

For those looking for rest, physically, emotionally, spiritually, in whatever form that rest takes

For the nursing homes that are losing the race between inoculation and infection

For those folks who are struggling to see a future or a way forward

For the black and brown members of our communities who are under unique threat during this uncertain time

For Maureen, Catherine's friend, who is in the middle of a non-Covid medical diagnosis

For the students returning to college campuses (and the families that send them), as everyone navigates uncertain waters  
Like the fishermen of the Galilee,  
Who had caught nothing and were hungry,  
And you called to them to follow,  
Be with us in our time of concern.

We pray for those who are ill  
and those facing the end of life.  
Give them the gift of prayer,  
that they may pour out their hearts to you.

We pray for those who bless with their lips  
but curse with their mouths,  
including ourselves.

We pray for the church and its leaders,  
that we may hear and respond to your call  
to be fishers of people.

Rock of our salvation,  
through Christ and your Holy Spirit  
bring us into the new world that you are shaping  
even as this world is passing away. 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](mailto:minister@bccnh.org) or call/text (978) 494-6953.]

#### **Hymn: *Follow Me* by Casting Crowns**

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

#### **Scripture Reading: Mark 1:14-20**

[Mark 1:14-20 [read for you](#)]

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their

nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

### **Reflection on the Scripture:**

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

I was coming off an overnight flight from Santiago to Miami with my dad. My dad is the nicest man. So I told him, "Stay behind me, don't let anyone get between the two of us. We'll get the luggage checked in for the flight home and then we can go back to being polite." Dad did what I asked and we made our flight to Boston. But if you have never gone through international arrivals in Miami and then had to check your luggage for an ongoing domestic flight, you don't know what chaos is.

Or maybe you do. Maybe it's just before rush hour on Route 3 when there are way too many cars going way too fast. Or it's a class of third graders at recess. Or it's the some-assembly-required bicycle with instructions written in six-point font, translated into English from Chinese using an automated translation engine.

Whatever you think chaos is, that's what the ancient writers thought the sea represented. And we can see that. The sea looks like the land. Maybe smooth as a meadow or with waves like hills. But then you get out there and things come up out of it. Fish, sure, but sharks and giant squids and who knows what else. On land, you get to the top of a hill and look over the other side and what was there yesterday is pretty much there today. The sea may be completely different. It has currents and winds. Sometimes they work with you, sometimes they work against you. The weather where you are may be gorgeous, but if there was a storm elsewhere, the sea can be wild.

Read through the beginning of Genesis and you see God creating the world by sorting out the chaos, by establishing where the land goes and where the water should be, unmixing the day and the night, so first there's one and then the other. In that story, creation isn't making something out of nothing, it's getting chaos under control. And it takes God to do it.

So when Jesus comes, and he is baptized by John and then heads into the wilderness, then returns to begin his ministry, he starts by calling disciples. It is time to spread the Good News and Jesus is looking for people not only to help him, but to take the task on for themselves. It's a new gig, and he needs people who have the right skills.

Today's reading doesn't say what Jesus saw in them, in Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John, as men. But it does say where they were when he called them. They were fishing. Two were on the Sea of Galilee, two were on its shore. The only other disciple where we know his previous profession was

Matthew, the tax collector.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me like Jesus was picking people who had figured out how to face chaos for their living.

So if you are going to fish for people, you are reaching into chaos. Chaos is where we live, it is the water we swim in. Chaos is what allows injustice to flourish. Chaos disables mercy. Chaos overwhelms humility. Chaos is what dilutes the Good News. If you are going to fish for people, you are going to have to face chaos. That's why you want people who specialize in facing chaos. Small wonder Jesus called fishermen to come and follow him.

But the thing is, think about all the jobs you know, all the jobs you've done. A cop, a teacher, a nurse, a Walmart associate, a telemarketer, a soldier, a technology executive, an architect, a farmer, a musician, a parent – all of them face chaos. When I think of the most unchaotic jobs I know and the people who are singularly good at them – compliance officer, documentation specialist, librarian – their jobs are to kick the stuffing out of chaos so the rest of us can have the resources we need.

So Jesus might have recruiting chaos specialists there on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, but he could have been anywhere. All of us specialize in confronting chaos. Sometimes the chaos we confront isn't the kind we're the best at confronting. Sometimes the finance people confront design problems and the design people confront finance problems and it's not pretty. But when we come together as a community to confront chaos, we do best when we get everyone in on the act and we get everyone confronting the chaos that they are designed to confront.

Because here's the thing. If you pull fish out of water, they die. And there was certainly some imagery here in Mark's gospel that was pointing to life after death, that we needed to die to the old before being born into the new<sup>3</sup>. But Jesus wasn't talking about something that was going to happen next, that was going to take place later. *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news* (Mark 1:15). Jesus calls Simon Peter and Andrew *and immediately they left their nets and followed him* (Mark 1:18). Jesus calls James and John and immediately they left their father in the boat with the hired men and followed Jesus (Mark 1:20). The Kingdom of God is here and now, immediately now, and we need people who will take on the chaos, so justice and mercy and humility can thrive, so we can flourish in the Good News.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Rogness, "Gospel: Commentary on Mark 1:14-20", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for January 25, 2015, Third Sunday after Epiphany", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=30081%2C30078%2C30079%2C30077> (accessed 21 January 2021)

<sup>3</sup> Osvaldo Vena, "Gospel: Commentary on Mark 1:14-20", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for January 24, 2021, Third Sunday after Epiphany", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=49265%2C49270%2C49271%2C49272> (accessed 17 January 2021)

Immediately. Here and now. Be ready for Jesus' call, because the kingdom of God has come near. Be ready to take on your flavor of chaos and know that others are doing the same. Because when we fish together, God fishes with us, chaos is set aside, and all of us flourish.

**Hymn: *Fishers of Men* by Rhonda Vincent**

[[Click here](#) for a video with (most of) the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

**Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given**

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

Merciful God, you have saved us for a purpose.  
We dedicate these gifts as we dedicate our lives to you,  
that you will make us fishers of people. **Amen.**

**A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World**

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

As we head back out into this coming week,  
Help us to accept our weariness,  
We are made for relationship,  
and right now we are too separated, too distanced.

Help us to reach for the line you have thrown us  
We are a people of love,  
too often missing the mark,  
too often exposed to anger.

Help us to weave a safety net  
that catches all those who need  
We are a people who plan,  
in a time where there are no plans, only constant change,  
season after season of uncertainty.

You have called on us to follow you,

Not for the first time.

Not for the last.

And we call on you, in need of the strength only you can give us.

In need of patience,  
hungry for confidence and hope  
that only you can bring.

Fisherman and fish calling out to one another.

Fish us up from the depths where we are drowning  
even now, Lord.

Especially. Now.

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: Fishers of Men by Newsboys**

[The song is loud, so let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

*Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.*





## PRAYER LIST (01/24/21)

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 the friends and family of Dave Larkin, who lost his battle with cancer on Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.
- For Joel, Susan's relative, who is hospitalized with Covid and pneumonia and is on a ventilator
- For Maureen, Barbara's relative, who was just diagnosed with advanced colorectal cancer
- For heart broken people, however their hearts were broken
- For Robs, Cath's friend, who had a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis come out of the blue
- For the challenges of bringing truth and love together in faithful witness
- For Carol's mom and brother, now that her mom is home from the hospital
- For Peter's work friends, who are dealing with Covid for the second time.
- For peace in the remaining transition of power in our federal and state capitals
- For those looking for rest, physically, emotionally, spiritually, in whatever form that rest takes
- For the nursing homes that are losing the race between inoculation and infection
- For those folks who are struggling to see a future or a way forward
- For the black and brown members of our communities who are under unique threat during this uncertain time
- For Maureen, Catherine's friend, who is in the middle of a non-Covid medical diagnosis
- For the students returning to college campuses (and the families that send them), as everyone navigates uncertain waters
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

### **Household Prayer: Morning<sup>4</sup>**

Loving God, no matter what I am facing today— mourning or gladness, buying or selling — help me to focus on you throughout it all. Then bring me home safely to you. Amen.

### **Household Prayer: Evening**

Loving God, thank you for the assurance that I live forgiven and loved by you. I need your grace and want to share your grace with others. As I face this night, help me to pour out my heart to you and then rest in peace. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Psalm 62 ends by saying, “God, you repay to all according to their work.” Some of us may find that statement unsettling. Would you rather have God treat you with the payment you deserve or with the grace that you hope for in Jesus Christ?

### **Daily Awareness Reflection<sup>5</sup>**

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 ...

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<sup>4</sup> The Morning & Evening Prayer and Question for Reflection are reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), 31.

**Announcements:**

Please shop [smile.amazon.com](https://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 +/-
<b>December</b>	\$97,768	\$84,886	\$12,881

**All people age 65+ are now in Phase 1b for COVID-19 vaccine distribution.**

Phase 1b begins scheduling on January 22 at 8:00am. Vaccines for Phase 1b start on January 26. [Use this page to determine in what phase you belong](#) and for further directions.

**Save the Date: 1/31 11:00am Church Mission Brainstorming session.**

We'd love to have as many folks as possible contribute to figuring out how we can best answer God's call to our church.

**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
- Butter and Margarine
- Cheese (sliced, shredded or block)
- Cheese Crackers (like Cheese Nips)
- Chips
- Cereal
- Cat Food (Dry and Wet)
- 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.

## **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/>