

*Brookline Community Church*

*January 31, 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: [Baptism \(Piano Duet\)](#) by Coco and Avery Merrill (no relation!)**

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

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

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

There was Moses with the burning bush,  
Isaiah with the burning tongue,  
Jeremiah, too young,  
Amos lonely for the sycamore trees —

Of course, there's "Go, be kind to all the wrong people."

Jonah got all swallowed up in that call.

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<sup>1</sup> Today's Centering Prayer and Prayer to Send Us Back out into the World were inspired by Maren Tirabassi, "From Nathanael's Point of View (1 John: 43-51)," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted January 14, 2021, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2021/01/14/from-philips-point-of-view-1-john-43-51/> (accessed January 24, 2021).

But what about a call that's not God's voice  
or mystical shrubbery or angels or whales?

Someone extremely human  
asks you to ... "Come and see."

"Zoom and see," but everyone knows  
nothing good comes out of ... church.

And then Jesus  
(who has extremely odd disciples)  
says he saw you at Starbucks with your laptop.

That's the point.  
You are stirred up and already thinking –  
Why not? I could do this ...  
fox-without-holes, miracles,  
stories that feel like my life  
but with trick endings,  
a crash course in the charismatic  
and dangerous, but  
it's better in a bit of a crowd.

There must be someone I know —  
someone as crazy and lonely  
and hopeful as me,  
that I need to find and say,  
or call, whatever ... "Come and see?"

Amen.

### **Hymn: *Lord, Speak to Me by the Altar of Praise* Chorale**

[\[Click here\]](#) 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.](#)]

Let us pray for the needs of the world, saying,  
Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For the healing of Earth and all its creatures;  
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For the church's willingness to cast out demons in its midst,  
for congregations that are in turmoil,  
for the healing of divisions between the followers of Christ Jesus;  
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For leaders of nations,  
for those who have great wealth,  
for those who have too much power,  
for those who have destructive weapons,  
and for those who have none;  
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For those who are victims of others' idolatry,  
for children who have no one to listen to their cries for food and shelter,  
for parents who cannot answer the needs of their children,  
for peacemakers and diplomats,  
for those who give through charities,  
and for those who use the law  
to make policies for the greater good;  
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For all who are in pain and in need of care,  
Those weighed down with concerns

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

For the students returning to college campuses (and the families that send  
them), as everyone navigates uncertain waters,

For people who have been at home for too long and are beginning to  
unravel, may they find ways to guard their mental health,

For the new president and vice-president, may they get the things they  
need to help all Americans and reduce everyone's stress level,

For Miriam, Sanjay's sister, and other university professors, whose careers  
are being changed by the increase in on-line education,

For the fears of the plexiglass never going away,

For the friends and family of Joel Goodman, Susan & Russell's relative,  
who passed away in the hospital from Covid,

For Elie and his continued recovery,

For worries that we can no longer really listen to each other,

hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For all those whose hearts are singing,  
Those lifted up with joy,

For staying where our feet are

hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For the wisdom to fear you rightly,  
the power to withstand changes in our own lives  
that bring us closer to you,  
for the ability to give thanks for the people  
who have brought us to this time—  
our ancestors, teachers, pastors, and the martyrs of every age;  
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

Into your hands we commend all those for whom we pray  
and those it would be easy to forget.  
We ask your blessing on all your people,  
that we may come at last to the truth  
around your banquet table that has no end;  
through Christ Jesus, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. **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: *God Has Spoken* by Melton Mowbray Team Parish**

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

#### **Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

[Deuteronomy 18:15-20 [read for you](#)]

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: 'If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.' Then the LORD replied to me: 'They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.'

## Reflection on the Scripture:

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

I was listening to a podcast this week, and one of the guests asked the others how many states they thought would be in the United States in 2050. What he was asking was, how many states would have seceded by then? I actually had to hit pause to wrap my head around that. It's felt like we were at some kind of inflection point in history, where we would look back on this time and remember it as the time when things began to change from what came before to the present state of affairs. But the thought that states would have seceded in my life time? I couldn't imagine how we could get from where we are to there.

The book of Deuteronomy was written about such an inflection point time. The people of Israel had been brought out of slavery, wandered in the wilderness and were standing on the edge of the Promised Land.<sup>2</sup> There was a whole history yet to come, the stories told in Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. But in that moment, they were about to come into the Promised Land, about to conquer the people already living there. They had gotten to this key moment because God had chosen them. Not because they were the richest or most powerful people, not because they were the most faithful. In fact, there was no good reason for choosing them, but God had chosen them anyway. They had a covenant with God that they would stay connected. Their presence in the Promised Land was a sign of that covenant.

The book of Deuteronomy was not only written *about* an inflection point, it was written *during* an inflection point. The text was written down during the exile and then edited and standardized once the people of Israel had returned from exile in Babylon. It was written during a time when they were not on the Promised Land, when God seemed absent, when it didn't seem possible that they had gone from a people who wandered through the wilderness together to the shattered remains of a people struggling to rebuild the great temple in Jerusalem. But they had.

The book of Deuteronomy was written by and for people who had lived through a tough truth. No matter how promising the beginning, no matter what your experience of what had come so far, disaster was coming. Maybe economic and racial inequality hadn't hit you. Maybe climate collapse or the loss of manufacturing jobs didn't affect you. Maybe a pandemic just meant you got to use all your introvert skills and working from home was so much better than the office. But disaster was coming and you were going to need a community to get through it. Disaster was coming and you were going to need God.

In the broadest sense a covenant meant God would assure the well-being of Israel, Israel would live in trust in and obedience to God.<sup>3</sup> That trust and

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Brueggemann, 17.

obedience need to show up in our public life, just economics, viable public power, faithful conduct of war, sustainable ordering of family life, right worship.<sup>4</sup> For our part of this covenant, we have to create and maintain a communal infrastructure that explicitly shows that we understand how we treat each other is a reflection of the sense of gratitude we have for everything God has given us.<sup>5</sup>

And even when disaster has struck, and the institutions which are part of that infrastructure are swept away, when our judges, our politicians, our priests, our experts are missing in action, God has provided a source of power and connection that doesn't rely on any of those. Built in to the covenant, from the very beginning, are the prophets. They will speak the word of God independently of any of the other structures in our community. When we can't hear God's word through any of the regular channels, God will call a prophet to speak.<sup>6</sup> We have one job. When the prophet gives us the word of God, we are to heed. In Hebrew, it's *shema'* and it shows up in today's reading three times (vv. 15, 16 and 19).<sup>7</sup> That's more than listening. We need to respond. We need to pay attention in such a way that our lives change. The heeding, the responding to the prophets is so important that instead of leaving it up to us to figure out how to punish those who drop the ball, God retains the right to punish directly (Deuteronomy 18:19). Yes, there will be false prophets and we absolutely have to look out for them. But we will not be left alone in the heart of disaster. God will call people to share God's word.

So, fine, God has called prophets who are speaking the Word to us today. I can point to the people I agree with, people I'm inspired by. Amanda Gorman [reading her poem \*The Hill We Climb\*](#) at the inauguration. But prophets come from outside the regular channels of power, that's how they're set up. So what do I do with people I don't agree with? Are the people who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Epiphany prophets too? And what about the much smaller acts, like the Brookline Police Department starting a [Senior Call-In Program](#) to make sure that our seniors are safe and well in their homes? Is that meant to be a reminder that we need to care for those who are so easily forgotten? Or is the guy on the podcast who asked about secession a prophet, warning me that if we don't start answering this question, I'm not going to live in the *United States* for much longer? Who am I supposed to be heeding, responding to?

That's where Deuteronomy comes in again, I think. We're supposed to figure that out as a community. By learning to recognize and trust God's true word, the

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<sup>4</sup> Brueggemann, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Brueggemann, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Richard A Puckett, "Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, Exegetical Perspective, Deuteronomy 18:15-20" 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), 293.

<sup>7</sup> Puckett, 295.

people learn to trust God's own self.<sup>8</sup> With more trust in God, the disasters that inevitably come can't hit as hard. And we are more likely to bring ourselves and our children through to whatever comes next.

**Hymn: *God Speaks in Many Different Ways* by KCGN Vacation Bible School**

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

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

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

For Earth, which you have molded,  
for creatures and animals, plants, water, air, and fire,  
for Jesus who died and rose again,  
for the breath of life,  
we give you thanks, O God.

Let our gifts be used for good wherever there is need,  
in the name of all that you have first given us,  
especially Christ Jesus, your Son, our Savior. Amen.

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

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

As we head back out into the coming week,  
Help us to remember the prophets.  
Not just all the stories we learned in Sunday School,  
But the stories we've learned along the way  
Martin and Martin, Rosa and Frances,  
Mum and Dad, Miss Philbin from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Help us to hear the call that comes through today,  
That sounds like someone asking for help,  
Or offering help,  
Or showing where we could be helpful.

Come and see,  
Zoom and see,  
Be and see,  
And realize that the prophets are all around us.  
Here. Today.  
Staying where their feet are.

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<sup>8</sup> Puckett, 295.

Help us to find the people  
as crazy and lonely  
and hopeful as we are,  
that we need to find and say,  
or call, whatever ... "Come and see?"

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: Speak, O Lord by Keith & Kristyn Getty**

[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 (01/31/21)

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 and Dave Larkin.
- 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 nursing homes that are losing the race between inoculation and infection,
- For the students returning to college campuses (and the families that send them), as everyone navigates uncertain waters,
- For people who have been at home for too long and are beginning to unravel, may they find ways to guard their mental health,
- For the new president and vice-president, may they get the things they need to help all Americans and reduce everyone's stress level,
- For Miriam, Sanjay's sister, and other university professors, whose careers are being changed by the increase in on-line education,
- For the fears of the plexiglass never going away,
- For the friends and family of Joel Goodman, Susan & Russell's relative, who passed away in the hospital from Covid,
- For Elie and his continued recovery,
- For worries that we can no longer really listen to each other,
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

### **Household Prayer: Morning<sup>9</sup>**

In the light of your new day, O God, I rise to greet you always on the path in front of me. Let me follow with integrity where you will lead. Give me courage to know the difference between what is false and what is true. Teach me to love my neighbor as you love me. Amen.

### **Household Prayer: Evening**

Heavenly Father, you are the power above all powers, the healer who knows our every need. You have guided me throughout this day and now give me sleep to renew my tired body and mind. Guard me and keep me in your care. Amen

### **Questions for Reflection**

What is the name of the demon, the spirit, the idolatry you carry? If you can think of this answer as many “troubles,” try to find the root cause, a name to give to that which needs to be cast out. The answer may take different forms throughout the week. You may also consider the same question with regard to your family and to this nation. What is the Holy One casting out today in your presence?

### **Daily Awareness Reflection<sup>10</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>9</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>10</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 began scheduling on January 22 at 8:00am. Vaccines for Phase 1b started on January 26. [Use this page to determine in what phase you belong](#) and for further directions. The Town of Brookline provided [some additional information](#).

## Save the Date: **Sunday! 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 our community's needs.

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 they're looking for:

- Applesauce
- Cup O' Noodles
- Hearty Canned Soups
- Jello (any flavor)
- Peanut Butter Crackers
- Pickles and Relish
- Jelly (any flavor except grape)
- Juice Boxes
- Flavored Oatmeal
- Pancake Mix
- Syrup
- Microwave Popcorn
- Hot Cocoa
- Men's Deodorant
- Laundry Detergent
- Dishwashing Liquid

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/>