



*Brookline Community Church*

*February 7, 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:** [O Love that Will Not Let Me Go](#) by Hayden Wiseman

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

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

[Join Ann Desrochers & John Panto, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: Long-awaited One, will this ever end?  
As we are unable to share the physical warmth with those whom we care for and love,  
As we feel the anxiety and fear as we wait for the test results,  
As we get tired of guessing the facial expressions behind those masks,

**All: We wonder if this will ever end.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Today's Centering Prayer and Prayer to Send Us Back out into the World were inspired by Rev. Yunki Kim, Provisional Elder, Trinity UMC, Montpelier, VT, who offered the *UMC's Daily Prayer during this COVID-19 Crisis* on December 5, 2020.

Leader: Long-awaited One, will this ever end?  
As we confess that it requires much more effort to grab onto hope,  
As we find it easier to list down our needs than our abundance,

**All: We wonder if this will ever end.**

Leader: Long-awaited One, will this ever end?  
As we find ourselves wrestling with the “purpose” amid this never-  
ending task of surviving,  
As we feel powerless before the widening gap in the trust among our  
society,  
As we are tempted, once again, to give up,

**All: We wonder if this will ever end.**

Leader: And in the midst of our passive anticipation for you to do something  
for us,  
we realize that it’s you who have been waiting for us, all along.  
It’s you who have been waiting for us all along, embracing all, even  
our skepticism.

**All: love more,  
hope more,  
peace more,  
joy more,  
and heal more,**

Leader: Long-awaited One, guide this day so that we may be found by you at  
peace.  
Guide our hearts so that our questions may dissolve into your  
promise.  
And guide our bodies so that we may lead the lives of holiness and  
godliness.  
Amen.

**All: Amen.**

### **Lifting up Our Joys and Concerns:**

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

Gracious God, you call us to follow Christ  
and spread the good news of your love for all people.

The good news is that you sing with us when we are lifted up with joy.

Let us pray

That we can pay the love we’ve received forward

That we’re beginning to count the people we know who have been  
vaccinated, not just stricken with Covid

Let us spread the good news that we are not alone.

The good news is that you draw ever nearer to us during times of concern.

Let us pray

For Dorothy, a friend of the church, who's going through chemotherapy

For Maureen, Cath's friend, who's recovering from brain surgery

Let us spread the good news that we are not alone.

Help us to become all things to all people  
that we might reach many with your good news. **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: *Speak Thy Word, My Lord* by Albert Ang**

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

**Scripture Reading: Mark 1:29-39**

[Mark 1:29-39 [read for you](#)]

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

## Reflection on the Scripture (in the recorded service, with my mom offering her off camera debut at the end):

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

*He came and took Simon Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them* (Mark 1:31). Jesus had just performed an exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum, come back for the midday meal, and healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law. What she had, how he healed her, we don't know. But he healed her and she got up and began to serve them. And "serve" here means a kind of meal service, cooking and making people welcome in her home and at her table.<sup>2</sup>

Simon Peter's mother-in-law had been healed. But that doesn't just mean she felt better. It also means she was able to return to her web of relationships.<sup>3</sup> Her society valued hospitality, especially towards strangers in the home, and there was Jesus without a thing to eat and drink. She had a role to play in her world and being ill kept her from it.<sup>4</sup> Her role may have been a very small one, her relationships may have been mostly within her own home, but when healed, she went back to fulfilling them as best she could.

We have this image of being healed as coming back to physical health. In the Bible, and in the Gospel of Mark in particular, being healed means your relationships, particularly your family relationships, are made whole.<sup>5</sup> Healing has a bigger meaning in the Bible, it means you can return to your place in the world and fill that spot fully.

Now, as a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman, I'm not sure how much I want to celebrate a woman old enough to be Jesus' mother, hopping up and serving these young men who have turned up in her home. Couldn't someone else have slapped together a sandwich? And I'm a tiny bit peeved that I say "Simon, Andrew, James, John" and then "Simon Peter's mother-in-law," instead of her name. But then, there are a whole lot of people whose names I don't know who serve me, like the lady at the supermarket who sold me the chips and guacamole. And I may not like how I was treated as a middle manager in any number of my technology companies, but I filled my role to the best of my ability.

---

<sup>2</sup> Matt Skinner, "Gospel: Commentary on Mark 1:29-39", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for February 8, 2015, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=30067%2C30071%2C30070%2C30068> (accessed 4 February 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, "Gospel: Commentary on Mark 1:29-39", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for February 4, 2018, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=29486%2C29487%2C29489%2C29488> (accessed 2 February 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Henrich, "Gospel: Commentary on Mark 1:29-39", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for February 5, 2012, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=32576%2C32577%2C32578%2C32575> (accessed 2 February 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Kittredge.

We see Jesus heal Simon Peter's mother-in-law, and when the Sabbath was over and the sky was beginning to darken, we see Jesus heal many more. They too are restored to health, but also to their relationships and to their places in society. When the disciples track Jesus down in the morning, everyone is searching for him (Mark 1:37) meaning there are still more people gathered in Capernaum looking for healing. Jesus says they should move on to other towns in the Galilee, preaching and healing and casting out demons. So, right here, at the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus sees his role as sharing the Good News that the Kingdom of God is upon us and healing people, especially the regular, everyday people whose names we do not know.<sup>6</sup>

And if we're followers of Jesus then that is our role too. Some of us will take on the physical healing, and thank heaven for that. Some will do the pharmaceutical research so we can have multiple vaccines against the pandemic in less than a year. But we have divided the healing job up these days, so that one group of people takes care of the physical body and all the relationships, all the returning to a role in society, are handled elsewhere. Or not handled at all.

In getting ready for this week's service, I read the following quote from Dr. Richard Selzer's book *Moral Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*:<sup>7</sup>

I stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face post-operative, her mouth twisted – palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed ... to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had cut the little nerve. The young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private ... . "Will my mouth always be like this?" she asks. "Yes," I say, "it will. It is because the nerve was cut." She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. "I like it," he says. "It is kind of cute." He bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I am so close that I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate her, to show her that their kiss still works ... . I hold my breath and let the wonder in.

I would certainly argue that Dr. Selzer had healed the young woman, by removing the tumor from her cheek. But let's give the young husband some credit for healing too. He healed something in the young woman that Dr. Selzer couldn't touch.

In this time of pandemic, when even the most social of social events, the Super Bowl party, is now to be done in lockdown, there's a lot of healing that still needs to be done. Relationships have faded because we've had to stay apart, because we couldn't put our arms around people. People's roles in society have

---

<sup>6</sup> Osvaldo Vena, "Gospel: Commentary on Mark 1:29-39", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for February 7, 2021, Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=49340%2C49341%2C49342%2C49343> (accessed 2 February 2021)

<sup>7</sup> P. C. Ennis, "Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Pastoral Perspective, Mark 1:29-39" 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), 336.

been erased because the way they filled those roles couldn't be done in enclosed spaces with other people around. That isn't the healing that doctors and nurses need to do. That's the kind of healing that the followers of Jesus need to do.

And while we look around to figure out what we should do, notice this last detail from today's reading. After a day of healing and exorcism, after healing in a synagogue and a private home and in the street, after healing men and women,<sup>8</sup> *in the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed* (Mark 1:35). Jesus healed generously, graciously, without rules and restrictions about who was going to get a portion of his time or attention or resources. But he also stepped aside, for quiet prayer, to connect with God. If we are going to follow him and heal, helping people come into deeper relationship with each other, bring themselves more fully to their role in society, then we also need to follow him into renewal and prayer.

In today's reading, I see a question about where are the relationships and roles you are called to heal. And I see a question about how you are called to recharge your resources so you can return and heal some more. Not always in the same place, not always for the same people. And sometimes you'll be called to move on while the work still feels a bit unfinished. But in this time of pandemic, we all need all the healing we can get. Amen

**Reflection on Scripture (in Zoom Worship):**

In the Zoom worship service, I'm going to invite whomever attends to move into breakout rooms to have small group discussion about Mark 1:29-39.

In the Bible, healing means more than just physically feeling better. It means being restored to your role in society, to your relationships. In present day society, we've broken that healing role up so the doctors and nurses take care of the physical body and someone else, or no one else, takes care of the rest.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1983), 53.

In getting ready for this week's service, I read the following quote from Dr. Richard Selzer's book *Moral Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*:<sup>9</sup>

I stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face post-operative, her mouth twisted – palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed ... to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had cut the little nerve. The young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private ... . “Will my mouth always be like this?” she asks. “Yes,” I say, “it will. It is because the nerve was cut.” She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. “I like it,” he says. “It is kind of cute.” He bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I am so close that I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate her, to show her that their kiss still works ... . I hold my breath and let the wonder in.

I thought that quote did a great job laying out multiple kinds of healing.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to take on the healing role. With such great need out there, how do we figure out what is ours to heal and what needs to be left for others? Do we help strangers or friends? How do we decide what needs to be healed: political divisions, racism, climate change, not wearing masks? Do we see the divisions in our society any differently when we look at them as healers?

Pick the question(s) you find most interesting and spend about 10 minutes exploring your answers. No need to come to consensus.

**Hymn: *Speak to Me* by Dave Lubben**

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

---

<sup>9</sup> P. C. Enniss, “Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Pastoral Perspective, Mark 1:29-39” 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), 336.

## **Sacrament of Communion<sup>10</sup>**

### **Invitation to the Table**

Leader:     Come to this table  
              because you want to celebrate –care in illness,  
              comfort in sorrow,  
              healing beyond curing,  
              peace in forgiveness,  
              hope in times of fear or threat.

              Come to this table  
              because you claim your abundance,  
              as culture defines it  
              or as your heart knows it.

              Come to this table  
              because you have discovered  
              your own generosity  
              and need to start giving.

              Come to this table  
              because you are willing  
              to be welcomed,  
              even when that is awkward,  
              and willing to welcome  
              to the limit of your resources,  
              and even to offer welcome  
              knowing it may be rejected.

              Come to this teeter-totter table,  
              where the bakers and the starving,  
              touch elbows and hearts.

---

<sup>10</sup> The communion liturgy was inspired by Maren Tirabassi's "Holy Communion Liturgy for February 7, 2021," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted January 29, 2021, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2021/01/29/strongholy-communion-liturgy-for-february-7-2021/> (accessed February 1, 2021).

## Words of Remembering

Leader: We remember that Jesus Christ came from a culture of oasis hospitality, stories of manna, grain gleaned, a raven feeding the prophet Elijah, Abigail hurrying to offer a feast, and a Passover meal for which everything stopped and all were fed.

**All: We remember.**

Leader: We remember that Jesus came from both family Sabbath evenings, and the rule-bending of grain plucked from a field when someone was hungry.

**All: We remember.**

Leader: We remember that Jesus remembered, that on his first day in the healing business, he lifted up a woman from her fever and she responded by serving everyone from the generosity of her wellness. Jesus sat and ate at that table.

**All: We remember.**

Leader: We remember that Jesus remembered that, near the end of his ministry, he called a short man from a tree into a forgiveness so abundant it became a meal for the least and lost. Jesus sat and ate at that table, too.

**All: We remember.**

Leader: And we remember that Jesus knew, when it was the last Passover, how important healing and turning lives around was, and blessed unleavened bread, and poured wine and love freely, inviting us always to share both brokenness and grace.

**All: We remember.**

## **Prayer of Consecration**

Leader: Gentle Host, rest upon us as you rested upon water and light, earth and creatures, human beings, all in your image, and even the cooking pots and serving bowls of those who love you. Send your Spirit of life and love, power and blessing upon your children that this bread may be broken and gathered in love and this cup poured out to give hope to all.

Risen Christ, live in us,  
**All: that we may live in you.**

Leader: Breathe in us,  
**All: that we may breathe in you.**

## **Sharing of the Elements**

Leader: Let us in our many places  
receive the gift of God, the bread of heaven.

**All: We are one in Christ in the bread we share.**  
[Eat the bread]

Leader: Let us with our many needs and many blessings,  
receive the gift of God, the cup of blessing.

**All: We are one in Christ in the cup we share.**  
[Drink from the cup.]

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Leader: Spirit of Christ, we give thanks for this grace, from our deep heritage of sanctuary Eucharists and community meals, and from our personal memories of many generous plates and your Holy Supper. Wrap your hopeful presence around all whose bodies, spirits and hearts need healing or hope, and let us become your compassionate spoon, your safe refuge. May we be lifted up to serve you and all your children in the world. Amen.

## **Hymn: *Speak Lord I'm Listening* by John B. Miller**

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

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

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

We sing to you, God, with thanksgiving,  
making melody to you with our praise.

Thank you for the vaccines,

and all the people working so hard to deliver them

Use the gifts we offer to spread your good news near and far,

for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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

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

Leader: Long-awaited One, we know this time will end.  
As we head back out into the coming week,  
We can keep our distance for one more week,  
We can find the good news in the smallest thing,

**All: We know this time will end.**

Leader: Long-awaited One, we know this time will end.  
We can call someone and ask how they're doing,  
We can send along a funny picture,  
We can snap a photo of a cooking disaster to email

**All: We know this time will end.**

Leader: Long-awaited One, we know this time will end.  
We can find new purpose in this time of challenge,  
We can close the gaps in our society with the help of others,  
We can realize our power and stay connected and engaged,

**All: We know this time will end.**

Leader: It's you who have been waiting for us to

**All: love more,  
hope more,  
peace more,  
joy more,  
and heal more,**

Leader: Long-awaited One, guide this day so that we may be found by you at peace. Guide our hearts so that our questions may dissolve into your promise. And guide our bodies so that we may lead the lives of holiness and godliness.

Amen.

**All: Amen.**

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

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

**Postlude: [Everlasting God](#) by Chris Tomlin**

[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 (02/07/21)

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 Dorothy, a friend of the church, who's going through chemotherapy
- For Maureen, Cath's friend, who's recovering from brain surgery
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

### **Household Prayer: Morning<sup>11</sup>**

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. As I turn to you in prayer this morning, God, bless me with a sense of purpose. As I go out into this day, show me what I am to do. Amen.

### **Household Prayer: Evening**

Everlasting God, you have been here from the foundations of the earth. I give to you this day now ending, with all its gifts and failings. As I rest through the night, renew my strength and, in my dreams, lift me up on the wings of eagles. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection**

What does Paul mean when he says that he became all things to all people so that he could save some (1 Cor. 9:22)?

### **Daily Awareness Reflection<sup>12</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 ...

---

<sup>11</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>12</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>January</b>	\$7,237	\$6,497	\$739

## 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.

## Open Mic Night at the Hollis Church: Sat. March 13, 7:00-8:30pm

The Congregational Church of Hollis is having an open mic night via Zoom. If you want to attend or perform, send an email to [openmic@hollischurch.org](mailto:openmic@hollischurch.org) to get on the Zoom invite mailing list. Should be a lot of fun!



## 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 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