



*Brookline  
Community Church*

*January 9, 2022*

*Rev. Catherine A.  
Merrill, Minister*

**Prelude:** [\*Home By Another Way\* by James Taylor](#)

**Call To Worship, Psalm 72:1-7, 12-14**

**Leader:** Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to a king's son.  
May he judge your people with righteousness,  
and your poor with justice.

**All:** **May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness.  
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,  
give deliverance to the needy,  
and crush the oppressor.**

**Leader:** May he live while the sun endures,  
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.  
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth.

**All:** **In his days may righteousness flourish  
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.**

**Leader:** For he delivers the needy when they call,  
the poor and those who have no helper.  
He has pity on the weak and the needy,  
and saves the lives of the needy.

**All:** **From oppression and violence he redeems their life;  
and precious is their blood in his sight.**

**Hymn: [Psalm 72 Hymn 'Give the King Your Judgments, oh God!' by Jesse & Leah Roberts](#)**

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.

**Children's Message (for kids of all ages):**

What gifts did the magi bring to the infant Jesus?

**Lifting up Our Joys and Concerns:**

God, you placed a star in the sky  
to draw wise folk to the place of Christ's nativity.  
There you revealed the mystery  
of your eternal purpose for all humanity:  
God made flesh, born of Mary,  
opening to all the world the promise you made  
to Abraham and Sarah.

Lift our hearts as high at that star when we are full of joy.

For those lifted up with joy, we pray

For great physical therapists who keep our bodies and souls motivated

For Peter's safe arrival in Norway and being settled in his apartment;  
hopefully his Norwegian improves to make grocery shopping easier

For Casey and her family, Bob and Linda's daughter, who are all on the mend from Covid

For Sarah, Rev. Cath's sister, who's coming for visit later this week

Empower your church to be as the light of the star.

Comfort those weighed down with concerns,

The way a star comforts us in darkest night

For those weighed down with concerns, we pray

For all those staying in isolation while they await the results of their Covid exposures

For Candy and Hailey, who have both been diagnosed with Covid and are recovering at home

For Clarence Farwell, recovering from a stroke

For the friends and family of Patty, Sue Laub's sister, who passed away in hospice before Christmas

For Eric, Rena's son, who had a benign tumor removed from his intestine last Wednesday

For the memory of Sidney Poitier who made so many hearts rejoice  
For Carl Crossman, Rena's son-in-law, as he continues to heal  
For Sarah, John Panto's sister, who is suffering with the loss of her son  
Steven, may she know that her grief is supported  
For David Johki, firefighter in town, who is facing some medical challenges  
For Morris, John Nicholson's dad, who has some medical challenges to  
overcome.

Empower your church to be as the light of the star.

Empower your church to be as the light of the star,  
that we may draw the world  
to the glory of Christ, our Lord, through whom we pray. 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 (857) 259-7269.]

### **Let us pray the Lord's Prayer 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.

### **Hymn: [We Three Kings by Nathan Drake](#)**

1. We three kings of Orient are  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and  
mountain  
Following yonder star  
2. Oh, star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy perfect light  
3. Born a king on Bethlehem's plain  
Gold I bring to crown Him again  
King forever, ceasing never  
Over us all to reign  
Repeat 2

4. Frankincense to offer have I  
Incense owns a deity nigh  
Prayer and praising, all men raising  
Worship him God most high  
Repeat 2  
5. Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
Breaths a life of gathering gloom  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding dying  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb  
Repeat 2  
6. Glorious now behold him arise  
King and God and sacrifice  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
Earth to heaven replies  
Repeat 2

**Scripture Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6, pp. 602-603**

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the LORD will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.

Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

**Reflection on the Scripture:**

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. (Isaiah 60:1). Yessssss!*

*Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. (Isaiah 60:5). Yessssss!*

Except it doesn't feel that way. It doesn't look that way. When I look at the country I love, I see division and people talking past each other, people not listening to each other at all. I see people celebrating Christmas in garages because someone was exposed to someone with Covid earlier in the week. And I see my own personal time bombs, things like diet ads that always pop up in early January, that always try to seduce me into believing that an eating disorder will go away if I just starve myself more effectively. I want to believe my light has come, I want to believe that my heart shall thrill and rejoice. But it mostly looks and feels like a grey day after Christmas.

This part of the book of Isaiah was written as the Israelites were returning from exile in Babylon. The leaders of Israel and their families were walking from Iraq to Israel, returning to start life over in Jerusalem. And if I had to imagine a time that felt less like God's light coming and that hearts will thrill and rejoice it would be then. They are leaving captivity, returning to a shattered city, with very few resources and the understanding that they are still a conquered nation and will have to pay tribute in addition to spending whatever they need to get their lives reestablished.

Yet the prophecy from Isaiah is one of joy. Arise, shine! The wealth of the nations shall come to you. Isaiah is pointing out that the reversal is total and without qualification. It is a gift of pure newness, offered without explanation or human reasons.<sup>1</sup> This is God's doing and depends on no human agency; it doesn't even depend on the community getting its act together to qualify for newness.

Isaiah is pointing out that this is a time to return to the tradition of the practice of hope in situations of deep despair. It is a practice we Christians inherited from Judaism and that we build upon. Tribulation produces hope and hope does not lead to despair. When circumstances are unbearable, then our faith moved beyond the circumstances to the God who governs all circumstances and who is not bound by any circumstance that has come before.<sup>2</sup> And so, Israel, a nation which has paid tribute to other empires for generations, will now receive tribute from other nations. And they won't send some second-rate bauble that just meets the requirements. They will send their best gifts of gold and frankincense.<sup>3</sup>

We hear about the gold and frankincense and we can't help think of the story of the wise men coming to worship the new king of Israel. And it is a story of bearing gifts. And God's unexpected and surprising presence in the world. We have this image of the wise men following a star and getting to the stable in Bethlehem and for Mary and Joseph and the infant Jesus it is a time to Arise and shine for the light has come and their hearts thrill and rejoice because these three rich and powerful strangers, who aren't even Jews, have seen something special in Jesus.

But from the wise men's perspective, what does it look like? There were years of study learning the heavens, so that a new star would stand out enough. There was curiosity to nourish to decide to see where that star might lead. There were resources to gather to have the gold, frankincense and myrrh to give. Plus the

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 211.

<sup>2</sup> Brueggemann, 211.

<sup>3</sup> Brueggemann, 205

camels and everything else that went into making a long journey.<sup>4</sup> They're probably pretty tired by the time they get to Jerusalem and Herod gives them the runaround. But they keep going to Bethlehem and find a king that's a baby, which is not really what they were looking for.

We want our epiphanies to be bright, sparkly ones. We want them to be Arise, Shine, for your light has come. We want our hearts to thrill and rejoice. We want other people paying us tribute because they come to our light (Isaiah 60:3). And if it doesn't look like that, then it mustn't be a real epiphany. Without all that, clearly we aren't in the place God intends us to be, because if we were, it would be all sparkly warkly.

But what if it's the kind of epiphany where we work for years to build skills and knowledge that allow us to notice something new in the world? What if we have resources to pull together that make a miracle for someone else, especially a young family that needs to get out of town in a hurry to avoid disaster? What if it's our curiosity to really listen to what our neighbors are saying amidst all the crazy talk that doesn't match any reality we're familiar with? What if we can keep going when we're tired and getting the runaround from the authorities? What if all that is the epiphany? What if all that is leading us to the place that God intends for us?

Is it any less a gift of pure newness because we used skills we have developed over years? Is it any less given by God without explanation or reliant on human agency if we end up using our skills in ways we would never have thought of on our own? If even with all our work and bringing together all the gifts and resources we have, we still know they are not enough in the face of circumstances, then is it still not a practice of hope in the face of tribulation?

So Arise, shine. Let your heart thrill and rejoice. Because all your gifts and resources have brought you to a moment of hope you didn't even realize you were in the middle of. Keep going and see where God is leading you.

**Hymn: [Let His Glory Be Seen](#)**

Oh I saw a distant land, and its glory was so grand  
I cried oh Lord how I long to be there  
Then I heard his gentle voice, "Come my child, it is your choice"  
Oh such hope that I'd never heard before

CHORUS:

Oh arise, let us run, for the morning light has come

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<sup>4</sup> Joanna Harader, "Living by the Word (Jan 3, 2015): Reflections on the Lectionary." *The Christian Century* 132 (26) (2015): 21.

And the darkness of the night flies away  
He has risen, He has come, and our home He has won  
Let His glory be seen on you today

Then the way grew dark with care, my heart trembled in despair  
I turned my eyes to my Lord with a prayer  
Through the dimness of the dawn, deeper truth then I was drawn  
Oh such hope, even brighter than before!  
(Repeat Chorus)

There a lonely soul I saw, standing near but yet withdrawn  
I bade him come to the land bright and fair  
With hope's glimmer in his eye, to the  
darkness said goodbye  
Then we sang, a note higher than before!  
(Repeat Chorus)

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

Leader: Glorious God,  
you led three men of wisdom  
to seek Jesus, your Holy Child, born of Mary.  
Overjoyed in the presence of his radiant light,  
the men knelt down at the infant's crib  
and offered him precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**All: We, too, offer our gifts  
in gratitude, reverence, and thanksgiving  
for the birth of your child,  
whom you called to lead the world into fullness of life.  
Receive and bless this offering  
as a joyful sign  
of the boundless love and abundant life  
we are called to share in Christ. Amen.**

### **Announcements**

#### **A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World (a riff on Psalm 72)**

Leader: Lead us to high expectations of the leaders of your people,  
That they may build up systems of justice, righteousness and  
prosperity for all the people

**All: May the leaders defend the cause of the poor, the needy and  
the oppressed. May the leaders do their work in our name.**

Leader: Knowing that our leaders are frail and fallible, that we are frail and  
fallible, and that it is easier to see to our own comforts than to attend  
the discomforts of others.

**All: True leadership endures throughout all time, it is as refreshing  
as the rain that falls on mown grass,**

Leader: Let us deliver those who have needs from their struggles, let us help  
those who are poor and have no one to help them.

**All: Not just once, but every time there is need and isolation.**

Leader: God's justice and prosperity is our model,

**All: God redeems the lives of the oppressed, precious is their life in  
God's sight. Amen**

Leader: 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."](#)



**Postlude: [Arise, Shine, For Your Light Has Come by Jered McKenna](#)**

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

**Psalm 72**

One of the Royal Psalms, Psalm 72 argues that the king has a responsibility to support and sustain the life of the poor and the marginal when they have no resources by which to sustain themselves. The psalm envisions a quite assertive, initiative-taking royal government on behalf of the poor and the needy.

The notion of justice and righteousness has to do with economic maintenance and with the maintenance of an independent judiciary that would not be merely an exploitative tool of the powerful. Thus, the verbs in verse 4, “defend, deliver, crush,” surely concern a viable court system in which the marginal can expect reliable redress from the rapaciousness of an acquisitive society.

The juxtaposition of verses 1-4 and 12-14 concerning care for the vulnerable by the regime and verses 5-7, 8-11, and 15-17 envisioning extravagant well-being for the regime form the contrast that makes the point of the psalm: care for the poor that becomes the basis for economic prosperity in the realm. The unstated but surely implied negative counterpoint is the recognition that neglect of the poor through economic indifference will inevitably lead to military failure and economic collapse.

But what human king or political leader has ever lived up to such expectations? Psalm 72 reminds us that while we cannot perfectly reflect the community creating justice that characterizes God’s purpose, we should also reject a self-indulgent refusal to attempt to bend public power toward genuine communal well-being.

Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalms*, in *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 311-316.



## PRAYER LIST (1/9/22)

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 June Hoff, Dave Larkin, Braedon O'Connor and Elly Austin.
- Luca, Amy's nephew, who's working with a new pediatrician who's helping him and his family
- 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 Judith Atherton, recovering from cardiac surgery
- For Clarence Farwell, recovering from a stroke
- For the friends and family of Patty, Sue Laub's sister, who passed away in hospice before Christmas
- For the friends and family of Pam Swick, friend of Dorothy & Ray Laneader, especially her wife TJ and their children; Pam passed away in the hospital from Covid
- For the friends and family of Brian Kurtz, especially his wife Melissa, a friend of Stacey Haight, who was killed in a car crash on Monday.
- For Eric, Rena's son, who had a benign tumor removed from his intestine last Wednesday
- For those suffering from addiction
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

### **Household Prayer: Morning<sup>5</sup>**

Glorious God, each day provides opportunity to awaken to the radiance of your presence, and to welcome your blessing into my life. How often I forget that I am your home! Help me to draw more closely to you, that I may manifest your love more deeply in the world. May every bright place and darkened corner grow ever more luminous as I bear your light this day. Amen.

### **Household Prayer: Evening**

Holy Jesus, I thank you for sharing your life with me today. As darkness comes and blankets the earth, be with all who suffer from sickness, hunger, or lack of shelter. Kindle in them the warmth of your presence, and surround them with your steadfast care. I am grateful for the blessings of this day. And in the light of your love I rest this night. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection**

In Epiphany when the magi make their great journey to see the Christ Child, we see Jesus drawing all creation to the divine life revealed in him, and we see the realization of God's dream of reconciled creation. In our own way, we are each endowed by the Spirit with unique and precious gifts for sharing God's healing love in a good but often divided world. What spiritual practices do you engage in that allow you to stay peaceful, courteous, and develop a respectful regard for difference? How do you stay present and create openness for finding, revealing, and activating God's reconciling love in the world?

### **Daily Awareness Reflection<sup>6</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 ...

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<sup>5</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>6</sup> Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), 31.

6. Look forward to the following day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God's desire for your life ...

## Announcements

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 +/-
December	\$100,731	\$89,522	\$11,209

Please shop [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and choose Brookline Community Church as your charity to support the church. Thanks!

There are several ways to send your offering.

1. Text "GIVE" to 603-506-4455 for your first time. Click "Sign In" then "Register for an Account"

2. Scan the QR code



3. Mail to: Brookline Community Church, PO Box 507, Brookline, NH 03033.

### Free Covid Home Tests for NH Residents

Gov. Sununu [announced a program to deliver free Covid home tests to NH residents](#). You just go to [the program's website](#), put in your zip code and then follow the prompts. They're delivered via Amazon.

### Boy Scout Troop 260 Collecting Trees Door to Door 12/30 & 1/8

For a \$10 suggested donation, you can have your tree taken care of once you've enjoyed it for the holidays. Email [brooklinetroop260@gmail.com](mailto:brooklinetroop260@gmail.com) or call (603) 235-1263. [More details](#).

### 2022 Calendars on Sale from the Historical Society!

The Brookline Historical Society is selling 2022 Calendars for \$20 at the Library and the Hollis Pharmacy. Email [info@brooklinehistory.org](mailto:info@brooklinehistory.org) for more details.

### Undecorate the Sanctuary on January 9<sup>th</sup>

If you can spare a bit of time after worship on January 9<sup>th</sup>, the Deacons would appreciate the help undecorating the sanctuary.

### Save the Date for Brookline Community Church's Annual Meeting on Zoom: Feb 6

More details to follow, but we'll worship together on-line, then take a short break before returning to have our Annual Meeting.

### The Church is Looking for Someone to Plow

We're grateful for the many years the Farwells have plowed the church's driveway. But that era is coming to an end. If you have someone who might be a good candidate for the job, please email Susan Haight ([sdlhaight@gmail.com](mailto:sdlhaight@gmail.com)).

## **Brookline Food Pantry**

Although we cannot be together physically at this time, Outreach is continuing to work 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:

Spam	Coffee
Juice and juice boxes	Pet food
Canned carrots	Detergent
Rice or noodle sides	

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.

Non-perishables can be dropped off at Brookline Town Hall (downstairs near the Town Clerk's Office), at the Brookline Post Office, or at the Cozy Tae Cart any time those places are open.

As always, perishable items such as bread, cheese, butter, eggs, meats, and milk can be donated during open pantry hours: Tues and Thurs, 10am - 2pm.

## **Habitat for Humanity Build in Nashua**

Although they are not accepting volunteer builders at the moment, we have provided a financial donation to Habitat for Humanity in Nashua. They are currently working on a duplex for two female veterans and their kids. Habitat would welcome financial contributions at this time as well.

## **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

## Reading Together During Epiphany

I'd like to try a book group again this Epiphany season to build our skills in noticing God's presence in this world and identifying the gifts we've been given and the gifts we need from others.

As before, I'll put forward three books and ask you to see which one the Holy Spirit leads you to. Because we need a bigger space with some airflow, let's meet in Fellowship Hall.

We'll select the book on January 16<sup>th</sup>. I'll have the reading assignments broken up for all three books, so we can leave that decision ready to read. (Remember to shop [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and choose Brookline Community Church as your charity to support the church.) We can pick to meet at 11:30am or 4:30pm.

I'd like us to try and meet on:

- January 30 (NFL games at 3:05 & 6:40pm)
- February 13 (Super Bowl kickoff at 6:30pm)
- February 27
- March 13 (depending on what book we choose, we may not need to meet)

I'd like to suggest we choose between:

***Project Hail Mary by Andy Weir (478 pages)***. Ryland Grace is the sole survivor on a desperate, last-chance mission - and if he fails, humanity and the Earth itself will perish. Except that right now, he doesn't know that. He can't even remember his own name, let alone the nature of his assignment or how to complete it.

His crewmates dead, his memories fuzzily returning, he realizes that an impossible task now confronts him. Alone on this tiny ship that's been cobbled together by every government and space agency on the planet and hurled into the depths of space, it's up to him to conquer an extinction-level threat to our species.

And thanks to an unexpected ally, he just might have a chance.

***Small Great Things by Jodi Picoult (470 pages)*** Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital with more than 20 years' experience. During her shift, Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request, but the next day, the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is alone in the nursery. Does she obey orders or does she intervene?

Ruth hesitates before performing CPR and, as a result, is charged with a serious crime. Kennedy McQuarrie, a white public defender, takes her case but gives unexpected advice: Kennedy insists that mentioning race in the courtroom is not a winning strategy. Conflicted by Kennedy's counsel, Ruth tries to keep life as normal as possible for her family - especially her teenage son - as the case becomes a media sensation. As the trial moves forward, Ruth and Kennedy must gain each other's trust, and come to see that what they've been taught their whole lives about others - and themselves - might be wrong.

***Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Atul Gawande (282 pages).** Medicine has triumphed in modern times, transforming birth, injury, and infectious disease from harrowing to manageable. But in the inevitable condition of aging and death, the goals of medicine seem too frequently to run counter to the interest of the human spirit.

Nursing homes, preoccupied with safety, pin patients into railed beds and wheelchairs. Hospitals isolate the dying, checking for vital signs long after the goals of cure have become moot. Doctors, committed to extending life, continue to carry out devastating procedures that in the end extend suffering.

Gawande, a practicing surgeon, addresses his profession's ultimate limitation, arguing that quality of life is the desired goal for patients and families. Gawande offers examples of freer, more socially fulfilling models for assisting the infirm and dependent elderly, and he explores the varieties of hospice care to demonstrate that a person's last weeks or months may be rich and dignified.