



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.

### **Prayer for Our Nation on Epiphany Evening<sup>1</sup>**

This service was recorded on January 6 & 7, 2021. The U.S. Capitol was broken into on the after of January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, as the results of the Electoral College were being certified. I elected not to change the service because I felt it supported the concerns about our ability to work together as a church and a nation. But I wanted to acknowledge the events in Washington. Thus, I began the service with [this prayer](#).

God, the US Capitol has been secured,  
but the people are not secure.

There is a curfew in Washington  
but the country cannot sleep.

It is Epiphany.

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<sup>1</sup> Maren Tirabassi, "Prayer for Epiphany evening, 2021," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted January 6, 2021, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2021/01/06/prayer-for-epiphany-evening-2021/> (accessed January 7, 2021).

We have trusted the guidance  
of a holy star,  
and now we must make a new map  
of compassion and wisdom,  
and find another way  
to travel together,  
with justice and reconciliation,  
another way to define home  
as a dwelling of healing  
for illness of body  
and of mind and spirit  
and comfort for those who grieve,  
where lies are not spoken,  
weapons are not raised,  
and every mouth is covered  
by a mask of care  
for the most vulnerable in our midst.

**Prelude: [Gifts of Joy](#) by Toby Jacobs**

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

**Centering Ourselves for Worship:<sup>2</sup>**

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

In response to God's infinite love and boundless grace,  
we rejoice to give thanks at all time and in all places,  
to the one who created order out of chaos,  
who penetrated the night of sin with the light of the world,  
and whose light cannot be overcome by human resistance.

We thank you, all-glorious God, living Spirit,  
for sending a star to guide the wise to Christ.

But even more we praise you for signs and witnesses  
in every generation that lead us to your Christ.

We thank you that Christ identified with sinners,  
preached good news to the poor,  
proclaimed release to those shackled by ignorance, prejudice, and injustice,  
and brought life and immortality to light by living the gospel-life.

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<sup>2</sup> Today's Centering Prayer and Prayer to Send Us Back out into the World were inspired by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi's *Touch Holiness*, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 55.

Help us to listen for your good news  
from the lips of those who surround us,  
whom the Holy Spirit has come upon,  
when no one expected God's presence in this world.

Amen.

**Hymn: *Of the Father's Love Begotten* by New Scottish Hymns Band**

[\[Click here\]](#) 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 to the Lord, saying,  
Give strength, O Lord, and bless us with peace.

All-glorious God,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
hear us as we pray:  
Give strength, O Lord,  
**and bless us with peace.**

We pray for the world you have made. . . .  
Move again over these troubled waters,  
steeped in chemicals and stained with blood.  
Where carelessness and violence bring chaos  
restore order, goodness, and life.  
Give strength, O Lord,  
**and bless us with peace.**

We pray for the church you have redeemed. . . .  
Renew in us the gifts of your Spirit  
and the call to Christian discipleship.  
Where history and heresy have divided us,  
make us one in the baptism we share.  
Give strength, O Lord,  
**and bless us with peace.**

We pray for the peoples you have created. . . .  
Give to the leaders of all nations  
the wisdom to know what is good.  
Where people are poor and hungry  
provide justice and daily bread.  
Give strength, O Lord,  
**and bless us with peace.**

We pray for those who have been lifted up with joy  
For James, Donna's dad, who's feeling better

For hopes for a quiet month of January

For little Wesley, Susan & Russell's grandson, who is crawling, then standing up holding onto furniture and turning around to walk. So maybe this is a concern after all.

For Adam & Jess, Ann & John's kids, who are going to have a kid of their own in June.

For the trips we get to look forward to, to Ireland, Florida and Kansas City

Sing with us as we celebrate the joys in this life.

Give strength, O Lord,

**and bless us with peace.**

We pray for those who have been weighed down with concerns,

For the friends and family of Aunt Margie, Amy's relative to be, who at 95 passed away from Covid, and will be attending Sam & Rich's wedding from heaven

For Frank, Amy's relative, who passed away from Covid

For Jim and Marie, Peter's friends, who are both in the hospital with Covid, but not in the same room, which is hard

For Joel, Susan's relative, who is hospitalized with Covid and has a ventilator on stand-by

For the Krauss family of Mont Vernon whose 7<sup>th</sup> grade son committed suicide, may they know the love that surrounds them

For Dave, shifting between hospital and rehab as he continues to improve

For all the exhausted people, whose need for rest for body, mind and spirit are going unmet

For those shaken by the events at the U.S. Capitol, may they find healing in the coming days, and renewed confidence in the people and institutions our national government relies on.

For those who feel their dignity is under attack, for speaking about their own beliefs

Come ever closer to us in our moments of need.

Give strength, O Lord,

**and bless us with peace.**

We pray for the loved ones you have given us. . . .  
Bless our families, friends, and neighbors;  
keep them safe from trouble and danger.  
Where there is sorrow, sickness, or suffering  
send your Spirit of comfort and healing.  
Give strength, O Lord,  
**and bless us with peace.**

All this we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus,  
whose voice is our strength and salvation,  
whose breath is the Spirit of peace. 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: *Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers* by Hymn Makers with Akhanoba Henshaw and Eifediyi John**

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

**Scripture Reading: Acts 19:1-7**

[Acts 19:1-7 [read for you](#)]

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them.

## Reflection on the Scripture:

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

Recently, it seems like the question I am asking most frequently is, “are you kidding me?” Or something profanely close to that. And yet here is Paul. He’s in Ephesus, the fourth largest city in the Roman empire.<sup>3</sup> There’s so much potential there for Paul to share what it means to Walk in the Way of Jesus Christ because there are so many people from so many different places. He’s come across a group of people who think they’re Christians. They’ve been baptized. But somehow they’ve never heard of the Holy Spirit, let alone experienced it.

And instead of dropping an f-bomb on them, Paul asks questions. *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?* (Acts 19:2) Nope, never heard of it. *Into what then were you baptized?* (Acts 19:3) Into John’s baptism, they reply, as if John were a brand, like being a Ford guy rather than a Chevy guy.<sup>4</sup>

For John the Baptist, accepting baptism was accepting that your life needed to turn around. Your efforts were inadequate and you needed to try harder. And for John the Baptist, someone was coming later that would make all the difference for the folks who had turned their lives around. But for Paul, whose life had spun out of his control on that road to Damascus, he knew that the baptism of repentance wasn’t the whole story. We take the first step and accept that our lives are a bit of a mess, we resolve to try harder. But after a while, when we rely solely on our own efforts, we realize we’re not getting anywhere in our new direction.<sup>5</sup> At some point, we realize that we need something more than ourselves, more than our own efforts. We need the grace of Jesus Christ to make the difference that our own efforts can’t pull off.

When we enter into the true baptism of the Lord Jesus, when we accept the grace he offers, it becomes so much easier to Walk in the Way. The Holy Spirit comes upon us. We have patience that comes out of nowhere. We have a sense of humor that lets us reset when we’re getting a little anxious. We can ask questions instead of just stomping around wondering what kind of idiots we’re dealing with. And how can they consider themselves baptized with that kind of half-baked, cockamamie theology that doesn’t even know about the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> Yung Suk Kim, “Second Reading: Commentary on Acts 19:1-7”, Working Preacher “Lectionary Commentaries for January 10, 2021, Baptism of Our Lord”, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=49243%2C49258%2C49259%2C49260> (accessed 4 January 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Eugene Eung-Chun Park, “Baptism of the Lord (First Sunday after the Epiphany), Exegetical Perspective, Acts 19:1-7” 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), 235.

<sup>5</sup> William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 141.

The Holy Spirit is key to the entire operation, now that Easter and Pentecost have passed and Jesus has ascended.

Paul baptizes them and they speak in tongues and prophesy (Acts 19:6). They share what it is like to have passed through that first stage of repentance and self-reliance and into the new stage of accepting grace, of experiencing the Holy Spirit working in their lives. It's not necessarily a miraculous, walk-on-water kind of thing. But the Holy Spirit gives a kind of resilience, a kind of space that allows someone like Paul to go past the discouragement of thinking he might have met some Christians already only to discover that they have missed a really key part of the message.

This Sunday is our Annual Meeting, where we'll discuss the budget. And it will be a challenging discussion because we're in the middle of a challenging situation. If it were up to me, we'd have morning worship upstairs, where we'd sing together. Then we'd head downstairs for a potluck lunch, that will be the best lunch in town on Sunday. We'd sit in the Social Hall and talk things through, tease each other a bit, laugh with each other a bit, make a holy space of silence and time when someone shares something that's clearly important to their faith. If it were up to my own efforts, that's what an Annual Meeting would always look like.

But a pandemic doesn't allow that to happen this year. So we'll all be apart, trapped in little Zoom boxes. My lunch will not be nearly as good, even if I pull a Take Home Meal out of the freezer. We'll have the challenge of not talking over each other because of the latency with Zoom. And the budget will still be a challenge because it's a challenging year.

So my prayer for myself for annual meeting is to think about Paul in Ephesus, to think about my baptism in the name of Lord Jesus. As if I need any more reminding that it is not up to me, I'll pray that I remember that the Holy Spirit can provide so much more resilience and creativity, so much more insight and patience, if I'm willing to get out of its way. Paul had a huge, challenging job in front of him. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:9, *I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.* I don't know what was more appealing to Paul, the wide door or the many adversaries. I'll pray that I can be more like Paul. But mostly I will pray that I will ask the questions the Holy Spirit prompts me to ask, and leave aside the impatient questions that I would ask if it were just up to me. Because it is not just up to me. It is up to all of us. The Holy Spirit isn't kidding any of us about how much we can do together when we are willing to rely on God and each other.

**Hymn: *Let There Be Light* by Brian & Katie Torwalt**

[[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**

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

The earth belongs to all glorious God, our creator;  
every good thing is a gift from the Lord.  
Let us glorify God through the gifts of our lives.

We give you thanks, O God,  
for every blessing and spiritual gift  
you have poured out upon us.  
Let the gifts of our lives  
be a source of blessing in your world,  
all to the glory of your holy name. **Amen.**

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

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

All-glorious God, as we head back out into the coming week,  
Help us to carry our feelings and our witness forward.

We bless you for the gifts you have lavishly given us,  
Though we are undeserving:

For new definitions of power and wisdom  
For removing the estrangement of sin  
For inviting all to faithful discipleship,  
For promising courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
For your presence in trial and rejoicing,  
For the sacrament of your extravagance,  
And for inviting us to dwell in your presence forever.

All-glorious God, we worship and praise you.  
with magi and shepherds, apostles and martyrs,  
we sing your glory.

At the name of Jesus let every knee bow,  
Every tongue confess,  
And every heart join in the song of the heavenly host,

Singing

Holy, Holy, Holy God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.

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: Let There Be Light by The City Harmonic**

[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 (1/10/21)

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 Aunt Margie, Amy's relative to be, who at 95 passed away from Covid, and will be attending Sam & Rich's wedding from heaven
- For Frank, Amy's relative, who passed away from Covid
- For Jim and Marie, Peter's friends, who are both in the hospital with Covid, but not in the same room, which is hard
- For Joel, Susan's relative, who is hospitalized with Covid and has a ventilator on stand-by
- For the Krauss family of Mont Vernon whose 7<sup>th</sup> grade son committed suicide, may they know the love that surrounds them
- For Dave, shifting between hospital and rehab as he continues to improve
- For all the exhausted people, whose need for rest for body, mind and spirit are going unmet
- For those shaken by the events at the U.S. Capitol, may they find healing in the coming days, and renewed confidence in the people and institutions our national government relies on.
- For those who feel their dignity is under attack, for speaking about their own beliefs
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

### **Household Prayer: Morning<sup>6</sup>**

Living God, maker of light, thank you for the gift of this day. Let me be a light in your world so that people will look at me and see the goodness of your creation; in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

### **Household Prayer: Evening**

Living God, maker of light, thank you for the gift of this night. Let me be at peace in your presence so that I may rest, be restored, and arise to praise your glory; in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection**

What is the difference between baptism with water alone (John's baptism; see Acts 19:3, Mark 1:8) and baptism with the Holy Spirit (baptism into Jesus; see Acts 19:4–5, Mark 1:8)? Why is it still important to use water in baptism? What does water mean in your daily life? What difference does the Holy Spirit make in baptism? What difference does the Holy Spirit make in your daily life?

### **Daily Awareness Reflection<sup>7</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>6</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>7</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                |

**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/>