

First Baptist Church in Needham

Meditations for Sunday, May 3, 2020
(or whenever you are so led to
pause, reflect, and pray)

Fourth Sunday of Eastertide

Edition 7

*Christ is risen—risen, indeed!
Alleluia!*



Lighting the Candle of Life

You may wish to light a candle or use the candle photo as a focus.

ALL: We light the Candle of Life — a candle that represents community, spirit, and the fullness of all of life — birth and death and all of the transitions in between and beyond.



How We Like Sheep...

This week, consider throughout the service how we are like the sheep used throughout scripture to describe humanity. Reflect on how these similarities inform your understanding of the Good Shepherd.

Sheep are afraid of running water and can easily tip over and drown. When their fear overwhelms them, they will dehydrate with nearby water available rather than risk attempting a drink. Shepherds guide herds to pools of still or gently flowing water in the open or provide them with stairs into water troughs to help sheep feel safe as they drink.

- *How do my fears prevent me from receiving what I need to thrive?*

Hymn 71

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

LOBE DEN HERREN

Written by the first important hymnist of the German Reformed Church, Joachim Neander (1650-1680), this text draws upon Psalm 23 for inspiration. Sing or speak these words, or listen to St. Andrew's Church choir in Chennai (Madras), Tamil Nadu, India, sing a version online here: <https://youtu.be/sAgDBQ3RM8E> ¹

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!

Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near, join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;
sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!

Have you not seen all that is needful has been sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.

Ponder anew what the Almighty can do, if with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.

Let the Amen sound from his people again; gladly forever adore him.

A Reading from Psalm 23 (NRSV)

Read the text aloud. Pause and notice what image or phrase stands out or "shimmers" as you tell the story.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

You make me lie down in green pastures;

you lead me beside still waters;

You restore my soul.

You lead me in right paths for your name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil; for you are with me;

your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

my whole life long.

ALL: The word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.



¹ Performed in 2016. St. Andrew's Church, also known as "The Kirk," is of the Scottish Presbyterian tradition.

<https://thekirk.in> .

Eastertide Alleluia Hymn 736 **Celtic Alleluia** arr. Fintan O'Carroll & Christopher Walker

This Alleluia response to the scripture reading will follow us through the season of Eastertide. Alleluia means "God be praised!" You may choose to recite it as a prayer of thanksgiving, sing it to your own tune, or sing along with this online version: https://youtu.be/kSS_TanMwWE ².

(Refrain) Alleluia, alleluia. Alleluia, alleluia.

The word of the Lord lasts forever. What is the word that is living?

It is brought to us through God's son, Jesus Christ. *(Refrain)*

How We Like Sheep...

Unlike other herd and domesticated animals, sheep will momentarily startle even when they hear the familiar voice of their shepherd. Shadows, a waved stick, a shout, or any unexpected change in environment can cause them to flee in all directions. Shepherds must continue to care for them, call to them, and remain a consistent presence in order to gain their trust.

- *What parts of my life do I continue to protect from God's care?*
- *When do I startle and flee from God's calling my name?*

Hymn 499

He Leadeth Me

HE LEADETH ME

Boston native and Baptist pastor, Joseph H. Gilmore (1834-1918) penned this hymn at the end of a lecture at First Baptist Church in Philadelphia in 1859 at age 25. Sing or recite it as a prayer of trust, or listen to Joel Rosenberger offer a piano/cello instrumental of it online at: https://youtu.be/CAHv_kjNleQ ³.

He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
nor ever murmur nor repine;
content, whate'er my lot may be,
since God through Jordan leadeth me. *[Refrain]*

[Refrain]

*He leadeth me, he leadeth me,
by his own hand he leadeth me;
his faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.*

And when my task on earth is done,
when by thy grace, the victory's won,
e'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me. *[Refrain]*

² *Spirit & Song: Disc B* © 2013 OCP. All Rights Reserved All Selections BMI Released on: 2013-11-15 Music Publisher: OCP

³ Music is from the Hymn Journeys CD, and is arranged, performed, and produced by Joel Rosenberger (2012). Hawaiian photos courtesy of Jeremy Rosenberger. <http://ubergeek.smugmug.com>.

Prayers of the People

If you have been attending Sunday worship, you know our sung prayer that brings us into the time of Prayers of the People. Enter into this time in song. If you don't know the tune, let the words be the doorway to your prayer.

Sung Prayer

Hear My Prayer, O Lord

BENZENHAFER
arr. Holly C. Benzenhafer

Hear my prayer, O Lord. Hear my prayer, O Lord.
I am asking, hear my prayer, O Lord.

Prayerful Meditation

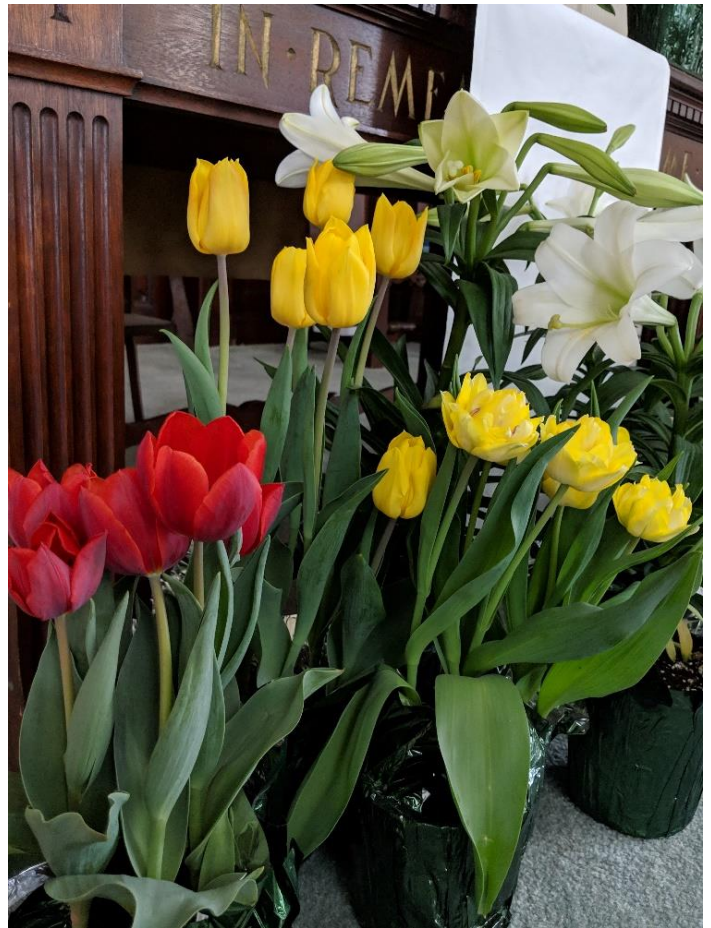
"This is who I want to be in the world. This is who I think we are supposed to be, people who help call forth human beings from deep inside hopelessness."⁴
--Anne Lamott

We Hold in Prayer...

Many of this week's prayers are requests from members of our congregation in the past week. **If you have general or specific prayer requests—joys as well as concerns—to share please contact Holly or Daryn to pass them along.**

As a community of faith gathered in Spirit when we cannot be in person, we offer our hearts and voices in prayer where we are, as we are, entrusting the Spirit's moving among us and responding far beyond our individual reach and influence...

Along with sister American Baptist Churches in Massachusetts, we bear witness to the grief of Rev. Dr. Maung Maung Htwe, his wife Nant Khine Aye, son Samuel Maung Ei (age 12), their extended family, and the Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship congregation he pastors in the death of their daughter Teresa May Maung (age 17) from COVID19 on April 19. Rev. Maung remains in ICU, his wife is in another hospital, and Samuel is with a relative as they all continue to live with COVID19...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*



⁴ Anne Lamott, *Stitches: A Handbook on Meaning, Hope, and Repair* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013), 79.

Also, with Pastor Daryn, we hold the family and friends of her former classmate, Holly Hinson of Lexington, NC, who died in a car accident on April 28. We hold, too, the family and colleagues of Dr. Lorna Breen who served as the medical director for the emergency department at New York-Presbyterian Allen Hospital in Manhattan and died of suicide on April 26. With Bev, we continue to lift the people of Nova Scotia, Bev's home province, as they continue to grieve from the mass shooting on April 19. For the lives lost to COVID19 and its impactful trauma, all persons who have entered God's nearer presence since last we entered prayer together, souls who grieve this day... and for souls whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Pastor Holly, we hold to God's continued care and healing persons who work in medical/health care and with vulnerable populations who, themselves have been diagnosed with COVID19. We especially lift up Johnny Gall, a case manager at Bay Cove Human Services working with Boston's homeless population; Rev. Lindsay Popperson, an assisted living chaplain who has been able to return to work...and for souls living with this virus whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Clif, Anthony, Harry, Andrew, and Pastor Daryn, our prayers extend to all members of medical, caregiving, advocacy, first-responder, and helping essential professions who live and work face-to-face with this virus each day, especially our own Anthony; Pastor Daryn as she assists as an on-call chaplain with Boston Hope at the Convention Center; Harry's grandson, Ryan Chin, a doctor in the Bronx; Ernie's sons Jay and Jonathan; and Andrew's cousins Ben Jackson, a vascular surgeon in Pennsylvania, and Katherine Thomas, a neurologist in Murray, Utah...and for souls engaged in this work whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Harry, John, Dorothy, and Clif we are grateful for safe homes, adequate food, and resources to allow spaces for rest, creativity, and reflection. For shelter; neighborhoods to walk; diversions of reading, television, and internet; nourishing meals to create and enjoy, and phone calls...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Pastor Daryn, Pastor Holly, Liz, and Andrew, we hold to God's watch-care persons enduring non-COVID19 illnesses and injury during the pandemic, especially Holly's colleagues Cassie Helms, a teacher at Grace House Ministries in Birmingham, AL, recovering from gallbladder cancer surgery and preparing to begin chemotherapy; Rev. Shandirai Mawokomatanda's (pastor, Wesley UMC, Worcester) father who has been hospitalized in Atlanta, GA; Daryn's cousin Draegen Scarborough recovering from shoulder surgery and entering a long recovery and rehabilitation; Liz's Aunt Virginia who has been released from hospital and is being cared for at home by family; Andrew as he continues to recover from respiratory ailments...and souls we hold dear and whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

We also hold in hope and prayer for continued wellbeing John's two daughters-in-law who are both pregnant and due in July and September; Andrew's daughter, Wren Marie Everhart, who is



due to give birth May 8 to a girl, Carmen Eloise...and with souls awaiting new life in all its forms whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Jim we hold Needham Community Council, suppliers, staff, and volunteers who daily work to provide food and resources to persons in need within our community. For their continued provision, the ongoing efforts of countless food banks, shelters, non-profits, and creative persons finding ways to provide aid, food, and compassion to neighbors and strangers alike...and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Anthony, Clif, and Pastor Holly we give thanks for the ongoing presence, affection, and love our animal companions offer daily, especially Pete, Moonshine, and Samhain... *Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

So too, with Harry, Clif, and Pastor Holly, we find joy and delight in the natural world that reminds us life is broader and deeper than this pandemic season. For daffodils, flowering trees, and tulips about to burst open; for yards to plant daisies and patios where mint, hostas, tiny violets, and ferns are returning...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Dorothy, Bev, and Harry, we acknowledge the tedium, constraint, boredom, depression, and loneliness of sheltering-at-home. And with Liz, we remember persons who must walk or depend on public transportation to access necessary supplies, food, and resources while ride-sharing is not available. For inconveniences, hardship, and the weight of COVID19 fatigue on mental health and well-being...and for souls whose names we speak aloud... *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Liz, we offer prayer for the upcoming Town election that procedures and decisions be discerned and implemented wisely. For Needham's elections and the countless hours of planning and preparation devoted to providing safe, just, and accurate electoral processes across the country...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Louise, Andrew, and Harry, we cherish family and friends who check in, call, and visit through Zoom. We celebrate with Andrew his brother-in-law Jess Turner's 80th birthday...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Andrew, we lift Native American persons and communities who are experiencing high incidents of COVID19 alongside inadequately funded and resourced healthcare systems compounded by deep poverty. For their safe-keeping and care, and especially for the staff and residents of Murrow Home...and souls living with systemic injustice, racism, and poverty made even more painful and traumatizing in the pandemic whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Ernie, Liz, Dorothy, Clif, and Louise, we lean toward the day we can be in worship and community together. We celebrate and prayerfully hope for the daily scientific and medical advances that will quell the virus and offer a gradual return to being present to one another. We honor the time for deep reflection and new outlooks on life to "take today and enjoy it," as Clif notes. We realize with Liz that while we are being transformed and life will be different (and for some is already difficult and scary), some of the changes we will find will be for the better. And we hold to the promise of God with us...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

For the prayers of our hearts that you, Holy One, know even when words cannot hold them...*Hear my prayer, O Lord....*

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.

How We Like Sheep...

Sheep are relatively defenseless when faced with predators. Smaller and less able to swiftly outrun predators, they rely on the Shepherd for their protection. Prone to parasites and disease, sheep also depend on the Shepherd to be vigilant in caring for them and coming to their aid in illness and injury.

- *In this season of Eastertide and COVID19, how may I place my health and well-being and that of beloved and stranger alike in God's keeping?*
- *How may I understand my preventative actions — isolation, handwashing, masks, sanitizing — to be acts of faith and spiritual practice?*

Hymn 536

Through the Darkness of the Ages

ABBOT'S LEIGH

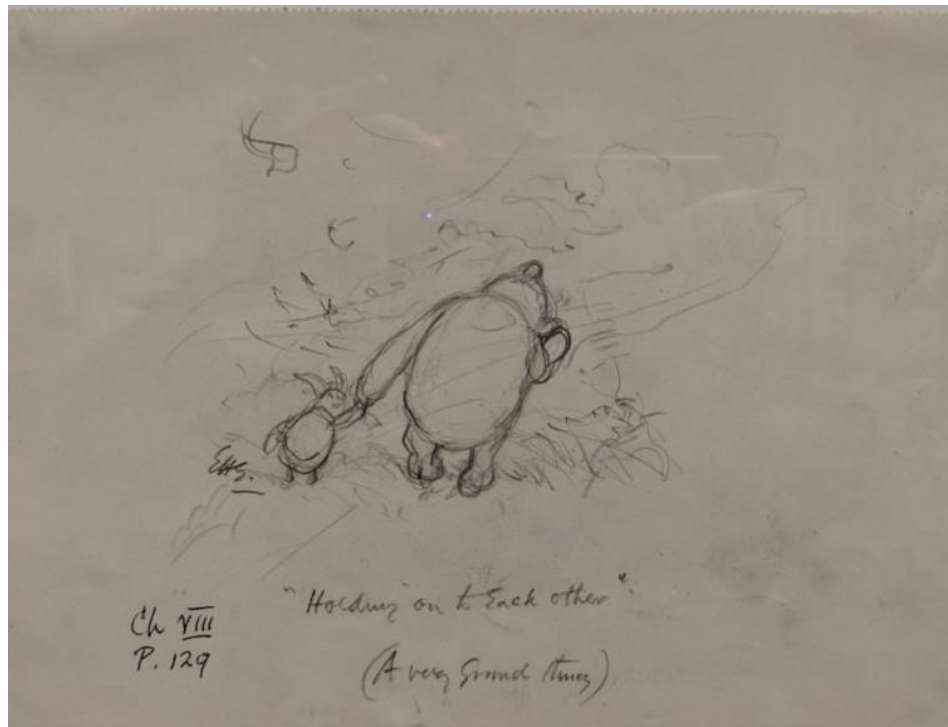
As you sing or read this hymn by British hymnist Hillary Jolly (b. 1945), hold to Christ's promised presence with you each and every day, and let it prepare you for the week ahead. Or, choose two verses to sing accompanied by organ online at: https://youtu.be/yc_Cu1-NLiU ⁵.

Through the darkness of the ages,
through the sorrows of the days,
strength of weary generations,
lifting hearts in hope and praise,
light in darkness, joy in sorrow,
presence to allay all fears,
Jesus, you have kept your promise,
faithful through two thousand years.

Bounty of two thousand harvests,
beauty of two thousand springs;
He who framed the times and seasons
has vouchsafed us greater things.
Word of God who spoke creation
speaks forgiveness, speaks to save,
gathers still his ransomed people
in the life he freely gave.

Countless flowers have bloomed and withered,
countless noons are sealed in night,
shattered thrones and fallen empires,
realms and riches lost from sight.
Christ, your kingdom still increases
as the centuries unfold.
Grain that fell to earth and perished
has brought forth ten thousand-fold.

Master, we shall sing your praises,
man of sorrows, God of power,
for the measured march of seasons
shall at last bring in the hour
when, as lightning leaps the heavens,
you return to lead us home.
You have promised, "I am coming."
Swiftly, our Lord Jesus, come.



6

⁵ Performed by Robert Haigler, Albany, Wisconsin (2015).

⁶ Pencil sketch of Winnie the Pooh and Piglet by A.A. Milne from exhibit at Boston Museum of Fine Art. Text reads "Holding on to Each Other" (A Very Good Day).

Offering

For online giving, go to <https://www.fbcneedham.org> or continue to support the ongoing ministry of the church by sending a check to the church office via mail to: First Baptist Church in Needham, 858 Great Plain Avenue, Needham MA 02492. Please indicate it is your offering or pledge on the check.

Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures here below.

Praise God above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Benediction

(Speak these words of benediction knowing that you are part of a loving community of faith. If you lit a candle at the beginning, you may wish to blow it out now.)

One: Our blessing to one another is that we are here for one another, that we are with one another, that we celebrate and remember one another along the journey.

ALL: We extinguish the Candle of Life, but the Light continues to shine within us. As we pass the peace we carry the Light of the Candle of Life from this hour into this world and beyond, offering peace, hope and light wherever the journey leads.

Passing of the Peace

(Picture in your mind's eye the faces of beloved souls with whom you would share the peace of Christ in person if you could, and offer each one your blessing of peace.)

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

One: Let us greet one another in peace as we prepare for the journey ahead.

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Announcements

While the Church Office and Building are currently closed, our ministry continues! Pastoral and office staff are working from home. Office voicemail and email are being checked regularly. If you have a pastoral concern, contact Pastor Daryn or Pastor Holly by email, phone, or text.

Needham Community Council continues to provide necessary resources and food to individuals in need of their services. If you or someone you know are in need of reaching out to them or if you want to learn how you can best volunteer to help at this time, go to their website at: <http://needhamcommunitycouncil.org>. *Please note: They ARE NOT accepting drop-off donations at this time due to safety protocols. Financial donations are greatly appreciated and needed.*

Rev. Dr. Maung Maung Htwe Family Fund – The Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship seeks to aid his family’s COVID19 expenses and the burial expenses for his daughter, Teresa May. **To make a donation to help Pastor Maung’s family**, send a check with a memo notation: Maung Family Fund to [FBC Needham, 858 Warren Street, Needham MA 02492](#), OR donate through our online portal at www.fbcneedham.org, choose “Other” and designate the gift to Maung Family Fund.

Needham Interfaith Clergy Association offers a weekly collection of online meditations from our different traditions. Both Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly are contributing. You can access episodes on YouTube by searching “Needham Interfaith Clergy.” Recent themes include “Accompaniment” <https://youtu.be/FoFoyGtfir8> and “Humor/Joy” <https://youtu.be/Xm5NZ-yzkBU>. Or, go to their Facebook page, and Like and Follow them for updates.

If you or someone you know needs help call 1-800-273-8255 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Or text *HOME* to 741-741 for free, 24-hour support from the Crisis Text Line.

Livestreaming Services: Many congregations are offering their services online both in real time or recorded to watch or listen as you are able. Here are a few you may wish to virtually “visit”:

- **Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, MS** – Available livestreaming online on Sundays 11:30-12:30 Eastern at <https://www.northminsterbaptist.live> . Prior recorded services are at <https://www.northminsterbaptist.live/on-demand> and then click on “Playlist” to select a date.
- **Harvard Memorial Chapel** – Available live on Sundays 11:00-noon on WHRB (95.3 FM radio or on online at <https://memorialchurch.harvard.edu/sunday-services-0> and then click “Listen Live” on the current Sunday). Recorded services are available on the same link under “Listen to Sunday Sermons” along with daily Morning Prayers under “Listen to Morning Prayers.”
- **First Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.** – Available online on Sundays 11:00-noon at <https://www.firstbaptistdc.org/upcoming-worship> and then follow links to Facebook Live. Prior recorded sermons are at <https://www.firstbaptistdc.org/listen-to-sermons>.
- **Boston University’s Marsh Chapel** – Available live on Sundays 11:00-noon on WBUR (90.9 FM radio or on online at <https://www.wbur.org/> and then click “Listen Live”). Recorded services are available as a podcast on iTunes or other RSS feeders (search: Marsh Chapel).

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