

## First Baptist Church in Needham

858 Great Plain Avenue, Needham MA  
02492 [www.fbcneedham.org](http://www.fbcneedham.org)

**Meditations for Sunday, July 12, 2020**  
(or whenever you are so led to pause,  
reflect, and pray)

### 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost Edition 17

#### Lighting the Candle of Life

You may wish to light a candle or use the  
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 the transitions in between and beyond.



#### Preparing to Enter Worship

“Plants are also integral to reweaving the connection between land and people. A place becomes home when it sustains you, when it feeds your body as well as spirit. To recreate a home, the plants must also return....

We lingered over coffee and our talk turned to his dreams of Kanatsiohareke. On this land he sees a working farm where people learn again how to grow traditional foods, a place for the traditional ceremonies to honor the cycle of the seasons, where ‘the words that come before all else’ are spoken....At the end of the words that come before all else, when thanks have been given to all the beings of the land, I asked, ‘has the land ever been known to thank you in reply?’ Tom was quiet for a second, piled more pancakes on my plate, and set the syrup jug in front of me. That’s as good an answer as I know.”<sup>1</sup>

#### Invitation:

*Plants are integral to the well-being of home and community. How we lovingly care for the flora of creation indicates how we care for ourselves. Coexistent, we neglect them to our own demise. Today, consider how the soil of your life enables the Sower’s seeds of enduring love to grow, or not.*

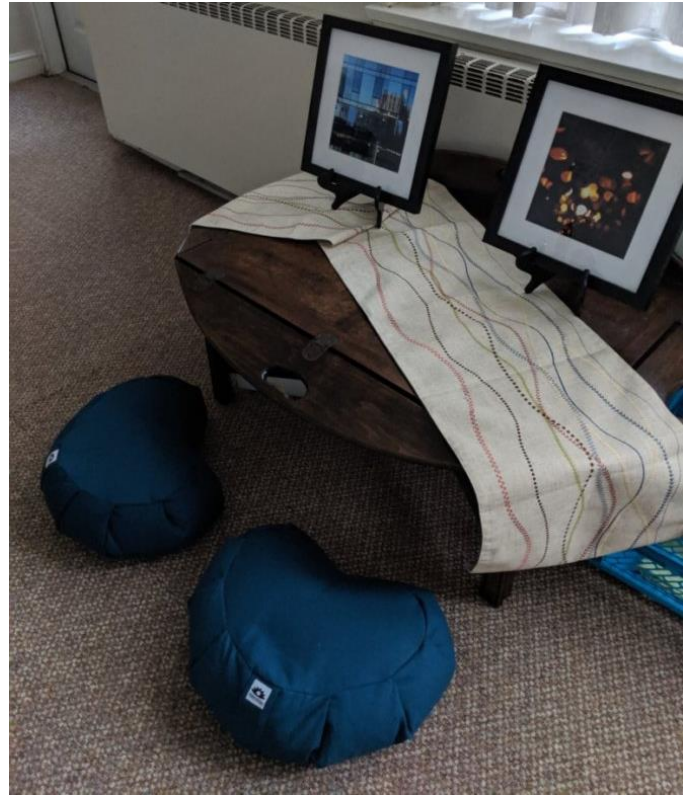
<sup>1</sup>Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, (Canada: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 259.

## Hymn 478

## Sweet Hour of Prayer

SWEET HOUR

William Walford (1772-1850) was a rural English pastor in Coleshill, Warwickshire. Little is known of him other than he was blind, committed huge sections of the Bible to memory quoting chapter and verse, and ran a trinket shop where he sold shoe horns and other items he whittled. Befriending New Yorker Thomas Salmon, Walford shared a few verses he had composed. Having no one to write them down, Walford held them in his memory. Salmon, however, realized how significant Walford's poetry was, and quickly wrote them down and sent them to a publisher noting, "How will this do?" asked he, as he repeated the following lines, with a complacent smile touched with some light lines of fear lest he subject himself to criticism. I rapidly copied the lines with my pencil, as he uttered them, and sent them for insertion in the Observer, if you should think them worthy of preservation." The editor did find Walford's words worthy and published them in 1845.<sup>2</sup>



Consider the wisdom, faith, and insights that go unheard and unheeded when we do not give ourselves to being present to one another...to listen...and to share. What have we missed in our hurry to get on with things? What have we lost when we do not pause for a "sweet hour" of prayer, of conversation, or of hearing a voice easily overlooked? Sing or read aloud these words, or sing with Melody St. Clair Randazzo accompanied by Greg Howlett online: <https://youtu.be/KhKNiHbMeD0>.<sup>3</sup>

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
that calls me from a world of care,  
and bids me at my Father's throne  
make all my wants and wishes known.  
In seasons of distress and grief,  
my soul has often found relief,  
and oft escaped the tempter's snare  
by thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
the joys I feel, the bliss I share  
of those whose anxious spirits burn  
with strong desires for thy return!

With such I hasten to the place  
where God my Savior shows his face,  
and gladly take my station there,  
and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
thy wings shall my petition bear  
to him whose truth and faithfulness  
engage the waiting soul to bless.  
And since he bids me seek his face,  
believe his word, and trust his grace,  
I'll cast on him my every care,  
and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/sweet-hour-of-prayer-first-printed-11630473.html>

<sup>3</sup> Greg Howlett is a Christian concert pianist and piano teacher. See his website, <http://greghowlett.com>



## A Reading from Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (NRSV)

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

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.

And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and



immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

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

## Hymn 664

## Thy Word

words & music by Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith

*Taken from Psalm 119: 105, this hymn will continue our Pentecost response to reading and hearing the word of God during worship. As a People of the Book, we turn again and again to our sacred text for guidance and discerning living. So too, the theologian Erugenia referred to the Bible as the “small” book of God’s revealing love and must always be read in relationship with the “big” book of God’s ongoing, embodied love—all creation, humanity included. Claiming the assertion of the Psalmist here, read these words aloud or sing them as a commitment this week to live the Divine love taught in the “small” book through your embodied actions of love, compassion, welcome, and healing presence within the “big” book of our shared lives. Or you may sing along with a live recording of Amy Grant singing in 2006 at Bass Hall in Fort Worth, Texas online at:*

[https://youtu.be/QuIF\\_wpYXqU](https://youtu.be/QuIF_wpYXqU).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sung during Grant’s first live concert recording in 25 years, "Time Again...Amy Grant Live." The concert was a retrospective journey through a lifetime's worth of her most treasured songs.

**Refrain:**

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
and a light unto my path.*

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
and a light unto my path.*

When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way,  
still you're there right beside me.

And nothing will I fear as long as you are near.  
Please be near me to the end. **[Refrain]**

I will not forget your love for me, and yet  
my heart forever is wandering.  
Jesus be my guide and hold me to your side;  
And I will love you to the end. **[Refrain]**

## The Path & Rocky Places ...

In this familiar parable of the Sower, Jesus speaks of the condition of our hearts, minds, and ways of being through four depictions of soil: the path, rocky places, brambles, and tilled soil. While most of us desire to find ourselves standing in the fertile, broken open, and receptive loam of the tilled soil, in reality, each of these types of soil finds its way into the narratives of our living stories. And so, today, **the challenge and risk** is to consider each of these forms of soil and how they are manifest in your life *right now*. Sit honestly with the questions. Take them into your week. Risk discomfort, embarrassment, guilt, or grief—for that is what the tilled soil requires: that we be willing to be turned over, upended, aerated, mixed with manure of what should have been and still may be, and made ready to receive seeds of promise in God's enduring and endless loving of us.

- **The Path** denotes hardened, packed down soil that can barely take in rain much less grow new life. Here, feet trample any hope of change, of growth, or of transformation. It cannot receive.
  - What are the hardened, packed down places in my life?
  - When have I been shut up, shut down, disregarded, or left out?
  - What places within me have been so harmed that I protect them with a fortress of defenses so strong I cannot see how to escape it by myself?
  - How may I trust—can I trust—God to risk vulnerability? Can I risk being seen as ugly, disappointing, or flawed in order to begin picking away are these hardened places?
- **The Rocky Places** point to neglect and disuse. With no stamina or maintenance, these places cannot maintain ongoing, generative life. Such places speak of the necessity of exercising (flexing the muscles of) spiritual formation and spiritual practice: learning and habit.
  - Where is my spiritual formation – my ongoing learning, reflection, and consideration of the deep interconnection of my life to all life and the Source of Life—dull or neglected?
  - What meaningful spiritual habits or practices am I neglecting (even though they feed my soul when I embody them)?
  - What spiritual habits or practices do I do out of sheer habit, obligation, or social pressure (even though they may have ceased to offer any nourishment)?
  - How may I thoughtfully and intentionally revive, renew, or rediscover the places of my life that I know need spiritual care and exercise—or let go of spiritual learning forms and practices that no longer provide sustenance in order to clear room for new ones—to be receptive to Spirit's bringing new life and Life to fruition?

## Hymn 311

### *Now the Green Blade Rises*

NOËL NOUVELET

*Born in Cheshire, England, John MacLeod Campbell Crum (1872-1958) was an Anglican priest and eventual canon at Canterbury. Crum authored books in theology, history, and for children. Likewise, he wrote original hymns, translated 4<sup>th</sup> century Latin hymns, and wrote sacred songs for children.<sup>5</sup> Crum's emphasis on imagery grounded in biblical texts presents the verdant growth of gardens, the fruits of nature, and summer as backdrop to Christ's love taking root and flourishing within each of us again and again. Sing, read aloud, or harmonize with the Smoke Fairies online at: <https://youtu.be/Y7uhbiUs6eY>.<sup>6</sup>*

Now the green blade rises, from the buried grain,  
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat arising green.

In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain,  
thinking that He never would awake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again like wheat arising green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;  
raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen:  
Love is come again like wheat arising green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Your touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again like wheat arising green.

## 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*

BENZENHAFFER  
arr. Holly C. Benzenhafer

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

### Prayerful Meditation

"An obvious aspect of faithfulness between deep friends is that we pray for each other. When we have a need of some kind, we hear people say, I hold you in the Light, or I hold you in heart and mind. We are glad of that, of course. But what about holding each other in prayer

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-now-the-green-blade-riseth>

<sup>6</sup> The Smoke Fairies are UK duo Katherine Blamire and Jessica Davies. This hymn is from their *Ghosts* album. Learn more at: <https://www.musicglue.com/smokefairies>

for no specific reason at all and for the best reason—to be faithful? Do we allow ourselves to experience that we are carried in one another's intercession?...

Prayer, for and with each other, is a profound conviction that Love is taking place and that we, in our smallness, are tapping into the very immensity that created the universe. Sacred writings amply testify that we can experience this

Beyond conflict and tension, beyond the *yeses* and *no's* of our lives, when we place our heart's friend in the radiant mystery of God's love and remain with them there in trust, we do on of the most faithful things we can do as companions on the way."<sup>7</sup>

*Enter into prayer trusting that God who lovingly calls you into relationship with each person, situation, condition, and concern – no matter how wonderful or difficult – is already there waiting for you.*

### **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...

With Barbara and Anthony, we continue to bear witness to the lives disrupted and threatened by the spread of COVID19 in our state and country. We hold in prayer the nearly 3.3 million reported bodies living with or who have survived the coronavirus in our country and for the countless persons who are have COVID19 but remain undiagnosed. We recognize the urgency of maintaining safety protocols supersedes our own preferences and discomfort and ask for patient endurance. For the nearly 13 million souls around the globe infected with this virus and those at risk of being infected...and for those souls we now name...**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....**

With Harry, we bear witness to the lives of persons who have died since last we gathered. We especially name Harry's friend, **May Lorenzo**, and hold her family, friends, and the good folk who participated with them in Chinatown's Unity Dinner and band to Spirit's deep peace. May her legacy live vibrantly in hospitality and music shared. We also stand in memory of the 135,000 souls who have died in our country due to COVID19 so far and for the 560,000 souls around the world lost to this pandemic. For the loss of their lives among us and the grief of their families and friends, we ask your Spirit's deepest consolation. For these dear ones and 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 Dorothy, Andrew, Anthony, Stan, Liz, and Pastor Holly, we hold persons enduring non-COVID19 concerns that are made even more complex at this time. We especially name Anthony's

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<sup>7</sup>Gunilla Norris, *Sheltered in the Heart: Spirituality in Deep Friendship* (Pawcatuck, CT: Homebound Publications, 2014), 47-48..



niece, **Charmaine**, who is living with lupus amid marital separation. We ask Spirit's moving through her sustained physical health and healing of heart and mind. We hold **Ernie** in your healing light as he continues radiation and chemotherapy. We also continue to lift **Helen** to Spirit's care as she lives within cancer treatment, as well. We pray that their side effects be minimal, their rest be restorative, and their well-being be sustained within the loving communities and relationships who hold them close to our hearts.

We hold baby **Carmen** and her mother **Wren** to your continued watchcare in these first months of life together. We also ask your consolation imbue upon persons living with ongoing heightened anxiety, depression, and fear in all their forms and contexts. We especially name Andrew's neighbor, **Ellen Evans** to your Spirit's abiding comfort. In the midst of suffering and unknowing, life changes and beloved presence, we gather these souls before you, Holy Spirit, and now speak the names of persons likewise confronting serious medical, emotional, and relational concerns...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

With Andrew, we honor the memory of animals who companion us on life's journey and their embodiment of unconditional love and acceptance so often limited in our own human species. We especially remember Andrew's sister, **Wendy** and her family as they mourn the loss of their dog, **Bingo**, age 13. May their grief over his absence in the routines and dailiness of their home be consoled by the years of joy they shared. For them and all who cherish the animals who grace us with their expressions of our Creator...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

With Stan, Harry, John, Anthony, and Barbara, we celebrate the pleasure of socially distanced visits of family and friends. As we hold the course in necessary safety measures, we are simultaneously grateful for the comfort of seeing those we love in person, when possible...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Clif, we offer gratitude for the enduring pleasure of summer gardens...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Andrew and Anthony, we pray for children and teachers in child care centers and the constant, exhaustive vigilance necessary to maintain safety protocols with young ones who do not understand why exploring their world as they developmentally do must be curtailed at this time. In the midst of this uncertainty, children's happy innocence keeps us from falling into



despair. For their health, the well-being of their families and those with whom they are in contact, and for teachers, children, and families we now name...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With John, we continue to anticipate the new lives being born even in a time of pandemic and social upheaval. We honor these little ones as beacons of hope that transformation and new beginnings await us as a people and individually. We especially raise to God's burning light, John's daughter-in-law who has entered super-quarantine in the final days of her pregnancy to ensure a safe and healthy delivery. For her and John's son, and for their family as they endeavor to remain as healthy as possible to greet this new wee life, and for all parents awaiting delivery who we now name...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Liz, Barbara, Harry, Stan, and Anthony, we give thanks for the Worship-at-Home Resource, the Thursday evening prayer service, the steadfast presence of biblical texts, and the many ways we may creatively continue to nurture our lives of faith and prayer as the Church continues to grow, flex, and respond to the needs of her people ...*Praise God, from whom all blessing flow....*

We celebrate the goodness of a year passed and the promise of one to come with **John** whose birthday was July 5...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Dorothy and Louise, we're grateful for each day we and our loved ones awake in good health and spirit...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Barbara, we offer thanks for the Wingate staff and persons working in all forms of assisted and residential living. For their tireless efforts to ensure the well-being and safety of the residents, for their own health, and for their continued presence and service...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Louise, we pray for our world in all her suffering and all her beauty. We learn this week of renewed gun violence in Chicago, stand-offs on military bases, the dissolution of needed and vital international relationships, and bureaucratic attacks on international students trying to navigate their education in our country. Our Asian citizens are racially denigrated and attacked by people who falsely blame them for the pandemic. Our Native Nations are decimated with little or no resources or adequate PPE to contain COVID19. Our Black and Brown sisters and brothers continue to cry for justice and relief from unbearable systemic pain while fearing this moment in history will also fade without transformation. Our white folk are both defensive and exhausted from grappling with the enormity of the injustices they have experienced in their favor over generations and must now come to terms with the long haul of real equity, justice, and loving compassion. Overwhelmed by the concerns of our world, we pause, and lean upon your heart, Holy One, to hear your heartbeat—your lovesong—for your children and creation, and we continue anew speaking these names to you ...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Pastor Holly, we draw to our hearts persons living into the reality of surviving the death of a beloved one, especially, Holly's **Uncle Tom Benzenhafer** as he navigates these early weeks



after her Aunt Deb's death. For him and all souls living in seasons of grief and loss and learning to live in new ways...*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

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.



### The Brambles, The Tended Soil...

The last two types of soil in Jesus' parable of the Sower find the seeds of God's enduring love falling on thorns, or brambles, and tended, prepared earth. Again, turn to today's **challenge and risk** to consider each of these forms of soil and how they are manifest in your life *right now*. Sit honestly with the questions. Take them into your week. Risk discomfort, embarrassment, guilt, or grief—for that is what the tended soil requires: that we be willing to be turned over, upended, aerated, mixed with manure of what should have been and still may be, and made ready to receive seeds of promise in God's enduring and endless loving of us.

- *The Brambles indicate the places of distraction and the lure of greed, wealth, and power that overwhelm whatever good intentions or effort made. Self-interest, me-mine-us versus them, and privileged complacency time and again choke out the blessings and benefit we could be in life.*
  - *What is a tangible example of when I've not acted on another's behalf because it would inconvenience me?*
  - *How may I hear the message of a protest, a colleague or friend's complaint, or witness injustice on the news with new ears? How may I listen with empathy and compassion even when I belong to the larger group being critiqued, criticized, or blamed?*

- *What comfort or security am I willing to let go so that other souls may know comfort and security, too?*
- *How may I endeavor to expand my circles of relationship, my reading and listening, and my experiences to break through the thorny places of my life and enable true community and spirit to flourish in my neighborhood, my community, my county, and my state?*
- *The Tended Soil* are the places of life that are ready, willing, and—most importantly—able to receive the seeds of the Holy Sower’s enduring love. Notice, though, Jesus stacks the deck in the parable so that most of what we must focus on are the places that still need work. And, anyone who has ever tended a garden or fields of a farm can attest, even tended soil must be continually cared for and maintained.
  - *What are 2-3 qualities of my life that I can authentically say are well-tended, balanced, and receptive to God’s moving?*
  - *How do I care for my body, mind, and soul each day? How am I gentle and nurturing with myself?*
  - *How open and receptive am I to encountering the Spirit in my relationships and encounters with others? What if it requires me to be upended, loosened, and changed?*
  - *Who do I desire to be under God’s tender care? For what do I long to bring to fruition in my life, the lives of my loved ones, and the life of each stranger I meet?*

## Hymn 358

## *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

BEECHER

*One of the best known of Charles Wesley’s 6500+ hymns<sup>8</sup>, this hymn also finds resonance across denominations and is not only found in Methodist and Anglican (Episcopal) hymnals but also Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic, Pentecostal, and Reformed hymnals, to name a few.<sup>9</sup> Wesley (1707-1788) was the primary musician in his notable family. His hymns are blends of biblical allusions and events current to his time. As we continue to ponder the parable of the sower and the seeding of our own souls’ ground, may this hymn open us to receive the nurturing and enduring love Christ offers us each moment. And may we, in turn, bear the fruit of the “new creation” in our embodied nurture and enduring love for our world this week. Sing or read aloud these words or sing along with the Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church choir in Singapore online at:*

<https://youtu.be/B9UtLqo5Kml>.<sup>10</sup>

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
 Joy of heav'n to earth come down:  
 fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
 all thy faithful mercies crown:  
 Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
 pure, unbounded love thou art;  
 visit us with thy salvation,  
 enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
 into ev'ry troubled breast;  
 let us all in thee inherit,  
 let us find the promised rest:  
 take away the bent of sinning;  
 Alpha and Omega be;  
 End of faith, as its Beginning,  
 set our hearts at liberty.

<sup>8</sup> [https://hymnary.org/person/Wesley\\_Charles](https://hymnary.org/person/Wesley_Charles)

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love\\_Divine,\\_All\\_Loves\\_Excelling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Divine,_All_Loves_Excelling)

<sup>10</sup> This recording was made by the church choir in April 2020 for online worship during COVID19. To learn more about the church, see: [www.amkmc.org.sg](http://www.amkmc.org.sg)

Come, Almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be:  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee;  
changed from glory into glory,  
'til in heav'n we take our place,  
'til we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

## Offering

*During this time of offering, consider going right now to <https://www.fbcneedham.org> to complete your offering or continue to support the ongoing ministry of the church by writing your check to the church office and preparing it to 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. Let this act be a spiritual practice woven within your worship.*

## 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.

### **Worship in God's Green Sanctuary Continues! Thursday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.**

*Reservations Required!*

Preregister **ON THURSDAY** to attend worship at [www.fbcneedham.org/worship-ministries](http://www.fbcneedham.org/worship-ministries)

Pastor Daryn is leading a trial worship experience outdoors on the lawn of First Baptist Church for the first four Thursday evenings of July at 6:00pm (July 2nd, July 9th, July 16th & July 23rd). We are delighted to creatively navigate this interesting moment in our lives of faith. Just a word of anticipation, this worship experience will not be traditional! Due to evidence that suggests group singing and collective responses to be unsafe, we will be experimenting with other forms of praise - drumming, streamers, clapping, etc. We trust that our praise, in whatever form it takes, will be glorifying and pleasing to God so long as we are also committed to the forms of praise God most cares about - care and justice for our neighbors (Isaiah 58, Amos 5:21-24). And in keeping with our care for you, we will continue to mail out and post online ([www.fbcneedham.org](http://www.fbcneedham.org)) our At-Home Worship Resources, and will continue to reserve Sunday mornings for our Community Calls of Caring.

We are stressing the health and well-being of everyone, so please understand **social distancing and mask wearing are a requirement for all participants!** Mingling before and after worship is discouraged. If you have been sick or are not feeling well, stay home. If you are in a vulnerable population and have underlying health conditions, or do not feel safe joining, please do not feel pressured to attend; God is with you wherever you are. Please do what feels right and safe for you and for others. If we realize we cannot accomplish this worship experience in a safe manner that upholds the dignity and health of all gathered, we will cancel until another time presents itself.

### **Needham Bricks for Justice Artist Installation at FBC Needham**

FBC Needham is honored and humbled to host a *NeedhamBricksforJustice* art installation memorializing the 90 black lives lost to police excessive force and violence so far in 2020. Ninety bricks were laid out on our front walk and steps, each bearing the name or picture of an individual lost to the same in our recent past.

When church is at its best, it holds the stories, witness, and testimony of its communities and allows space for those stories to speak, to engage, and transform hearts, attitudes and bodies toward a more loving and healing presence and witness in the world. We hope this installation does just that - that it bears witness to the stories of our communities, that it calls hearts and minds to engage and be transformed toward more loving policy, loving action, and loving encounter in all that we do, and is done in and through us. We are honored to hold space for the witness for justice of these artists, and especially to hold space for the stories of the lives memorialized in and through their art. Thank you, **Charlotte Caron**, and to your team of artists and all those who contributed to this witness for justice in our community. <https://bricksforjustice.wixsite.com/needham>



**Needham Interfaith Clergy Conversations** – Our community’s ministers continue to offer thoughtful online conversations on different topics. The videos may be found on YouTube, by searching for “Needham Interfaith Clergy Conversations.”

**Do You Need Washable Masks?** Be Kind Needham Masks for Seniors is a local organization making washable fabric masks available to local senior residents *for free*. Your health and safety in the weeks and months ahead is paramount, and having reusable, washable masks aids sanitation, is environmentally friendly, and is cost-effective. If you or a senior you know need masks, please contact Pastor Daryn or Pastor Holly.

**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.*

**Text and Photo Attributions:** “Blue Hydrangea;” “Circles of Silence Retreat Candle;” “Visio Divina, Coombs Lounge;” “Sower, Faith Lutheran, 2020;” “Cattails, Washington State;” and “Bearing Fruit, Faith Lutheran, 2020” by ©Holly C. Benzenhafer 2020. Use with permission.