First Baptist Church in Needham

858 Great Plain Avenue, Needham MA 02492 www.fbcneedham.org

Meditations for Sunday, July 19, 2020 (or whenever you are so led to pause, reflect, and pray)

7th Sunday after Pentecost

Edition 18



Lighting the Candle of Life

You may wish to light a candle or use the photo of the Boston skyline sunset 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 *Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 (NRSV)*

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Invitation:

The Holy One who spoke us into being and breathed Ruach (Spirit) into us, enlivening us, knows us better than we know ourselves. Our strengths and noble selves and our flaws and greatest shame and guilt are held in God's knowing. Nowhere and nothing can be hidden from our Creator who loves us and loves our beautiful, suffering, gracious, painful world. In this complexity, we enter with the Psalmist into worship together.

Hymn 131

Surely the Presence words & music arr. by Lanny Wolfe

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Lanny Wolfe (b. 1942) grew up riding the city bus with his mother and two siblings each Sunday to church. After an initial start with piano lessons at age nine, Wolfe's teacher moved, and he didn't receive formal music training again until college. Instead, he learned to play by ear. After earning a MBA in business administration, he entered a graduate music program for the first time. Wolfe's career as an educator and administrator in both high schools and Bible seminaries has occurred alongside his music composition and performance in the Larry Wolfe Trio. His contemporary gospel songs continue win awards and to resonate today. Sing or read aloud these words, or sing along with Wolfe, himself, as he performs this hymn and briefly tells how it came to him while the Trio was participating in the opening service of a new church in Columbia, Mississippi, (FYI, Columbia is about 30 minutes from Pastor Holly's hometown of Prentiss) online: https://youtu.be/CXpHuabO1dg.2

In the midst of His children the Lord said He would be. It doesn't take very many it can be just two or three. And I feel that same sweet spirit that I felt oft times before. Surely I can say I've been with My Lord

[Refrain]

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. I can feel God's mighty power and God's grace.

A Reading from Genesis 28:10-19a (NRSV)

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

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was I can hear the brush of angel's wings, I see glory on each face. *Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.*

There's a holy hush around us, as God's glory fills this place. I've touched the hem of God's garment, I can almost see God's face. And my heart is over flowing with the fullness of God's joy. And I know, without a doubt, that I've been with the Lord.



¹ To learn more about Wolfe, see https://paradigmmusic.net/111-2/

² This 2015 performance includes with Lanny Wolfe, Danny Shelton, Yvonne Lewis, John Lomacang, Melody Shelton-Firestone, CA Murray, ET Everett, Tammy Chance, Lisa Yeager, and Reggie and Layde Love Smith on the Three Angels Broadcast Network (3ABN).

a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

And the LORD stood beside him and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your



offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place--and I did not know it!" And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

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 continues our Pentecost response to reading and hearing the word of God during worship. 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 online at: https://youtu.be/QuJF_wpYXqU.³

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]

³ Sung in 2006 during Grant's first live concert recording in 25 years at Bass Hall in Fort Worth, Texas, "Time Again...Amy Grant Live." The concert was a retrospective journey through a lifetime's worth of her most treasured songs.

"Big" Dreams ...

It's important to remember that Jacob ends up on the way to Haran because he's tricked his twin brother, Esau, out of his rightful inheritance and then run away. Jacob has caused rifts between his parents and with his brother. His actions have severed the family and rather than seeking to restore and heal the pain, he runs away. And in the middle of this traumatic set of events, he sleeps and experiences what dream researchers call a "big" or transformative dream. Yes, there are angels and ladders and glory, but notice...the Lord stands next to Jacob. Just like *Dei* visited his grandparents, Abraham and Sarah, the Lord, they, appears to Jacob. Notably, God comes to Jacob in a dream rather than in the waking life of his grandparents. This subtle shift points to Jacob gradually moving away from an abiding attunement with the Divine where God is known face to face to one where the Holy One now appears only when Jacob is receptive to perceiving God's Presence—in his dreaming.

- Such transformative dreams have particular qualities that make them different from regular dreaming. They are rare and stand out with unusual intensity. They have strikingly bizarre or beautiful imagery. They are memorable. They often include a message, a sense of profound peace or love, or a confidence to move forward upon waking. How do I attend to my dreaming life? Do I value the experiences I live through in my dreaming, or do I dismiss the third of my day needed for sleep and restoration and what I experience during it?
- Many people are reporting intense dreams during COVID19. What are my dreams during this time? How may my dreams inform or reveal insight into my experiences in waking life now?

Hymn We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder African-American Spiritual

Scholars believe this familiar Spiritual was possibly sung as early as the 1750s by enslaved people from the area now known as Liberia and indicate it was definitely sung by 1825. Not allowed to speak when working in the fields, enslaved people were permitted to sing or chant a call-response to break the monotony and create a rhythm that set the work-pace. This song and other Spirituals also served to engender hope and promise that God would eventually lead the singers to freedom and contributed to the vibrant and rich culture and resistance of a people living within the horror of American slavery. Seemingly oblivious to its subversive intent toward slavery, "Jacob's Ladder" became one of the first Spirituals sung and beloved by white Christians, including slave-owners. The song's repetitive, simple tune has allowed a wide range of verses over the centuries and lends itself to new additions relevant to each generation. Sing, read aloud, or listen to the Harrow Community Gospel Choir of Harrow, UK, perform it at The Hague online at: https://vimeo.com/345294394. 5

We are climbing Jacob's Ladder. [Repeat twice] Soldiers of the cross. Glory Halleluja!

Brother, sister, will you follow?. [Repeat twice] Soldiers of the cross. Glory Halleluja!

Every round goes higher, higher. [Repeat twice] Soldiers of the cross. Glory Halleluja!

Rise and shine and give God glory! [Repeat twice] Soldiers of the cross. Glory Halleluja!

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_Are_Climbing_Jacob%27s_Ladder

⁵ This non-audition community choir performed at The Hague in May, 2019. Director, CeCelia Wickham-Anderson is a member of the acapella group, *Black Voices*. The choir was initially formed in 2013 as part of a larger arts initiative celebrating the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech during the March on Washington. They now perform contemporary gospel and spirituals throughout the UK and Europe. Learn more at: https://harrowcommunitygospelchoir.com/.

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

"...prayer and meditation can be thought of as the creation of a mental space in which the energies of dreaming and the concerns of waking life are invited to meet each other and to have a mutual, open-ended conversation."

Enter into prayer trusting that God who walks beside you in your waking also accompanies you through your dreaming – keeping vigil, ever present.

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, Pastor Holly, and Pastor Daryn, we continue to bear witness to the lives disrupted and threatened by the spread of COVID19 in our state and country. We especially hold the parents of Holly's colleague Stephen, Rod and Shirley, who are hospitalized with COVID19. We hold in prayer the nearly 3.7 million reported bodies living with or who have survived the coronavirus in our country



⁶Kelly Bulkeley, *Transforming Dreams: Learning Spiritual Lessons from the Dreams You Never Forget* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

and for the countless persons who are have COVID19 but remain undiagnosed. We pray for our own patient endurance as we hold the frontline workers who continue to risk their lives around our country to serve and heal bodies facing the devastation of this coronavirus. For the nearly 14 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...*.

We bear witness to the lives of persons who have died since last we gathered. We also stand in memory of the 138,000+ souls who have died in our country due to COVID19 so far and for the 590,000 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 Pastor Daryn, Pastor Holly, Bev, Ernie, Clif, and Anthony, we hold persons enduring non-COVID19 concerns that are made even more complex at this time. We hold **Ernie** in your healing light as he lives within the waves of chemotherapy treatment. We also continue to lift **Helen** to Spirit's care as she lives within cancer treatment. 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. With Daryn, we also lift her neighbor, **Sal LaFace** and his wife and family as he also enters treatment for cancer. We hold Ernie's grandson, **Mac** to your healing care as he recovers from an injury that prevents him from playing soccer for now. We hold **Pastor Holly** as she deals with recurring wrist and hand injury and seeks relief from pain.

We continue to hold Daryn's **Aunt Lana** in prayer for her healing and recovery from congestive heart failure. We continue to hold Anthony's niece, **Charmaine** to your healing and sustaining presence. With Ernie, we continue prayer for his neighbor, **Ann Cosgrove**, as she begins chemotherapy and radiation treatments for cancer. 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 and Bev, we pray for an effective, reliable, and safe vaccine to COVID19. For the dedicated effort of so many in medical research and scientific development who are working tirelessly to develop this treatment while the pandemic rages on...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Barbara, we offer thanks for the beauty of nature and the pleasure of gardens, especially those on the grounds at Wingate...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow...*.

With Stan, Louise, Ernie, Clif, and Barbara, we are grateful to see family and friends, for their phone calls checking in, and for their continued good health. We are especially thankful for the ability of residents in some assisted living and residential communities to have socially distanced

visitors. For the pleasure and blessing of seeing and being seen by dear ones...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Louise and Bev, we give thanks for air conditioning on hot, humid days and the relief it brings to people sheltering-at-home as well as people in hospital...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Yolanda Harris, Bev, Anthony, Barbara, Stan, Ernie, and Pastor Daryn, we are thankful for the Worship-at-Home Resource and the many ways in which we can remain attuned to God's presence in worship and prayer. We cherish the Thursday outdoor services and the ability for some of us to prayerfully be together by navigating these gatherings with cautious and caring social distancing. For the resilience of the Body of Christ to care for one another and hold each other and the world in regular prayer that transcends all space and time...*Praise God, from whom all blessing flow....*

With Anthony and Stan, we give thanks for physical exercise and meditation and the healing qualities they offer daily to body, mind, and soul. We seek ways to promote health, balance, and well-being in this most chaotic time and cherish the peace of mind caring for our bodies and minds offers...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Pastor Holly, we give deep thanks for the Mississippi legislature's and governor's actions to finally remove the Mississippi flag with the Confederate flag on it as the state flag...Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....We bear witness to the decades of pain, division, and undue shame this symbol has wrought and the countless heinous and thoughtless actions done under its shadow and its impediment to race relations and trust. We pray for and embodying of hope that this formal action is a catalyst to transformative communal action, and we acknowledge our own need to continue to confront and work toward daily racial healing in our own neighborhoods, work, and communities...Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....

With Stan, we anticipate his **grandchild** due at the end of August. We celebrate



Christy's continued good health and good reports from her doctor and pray for her and the family's well-being as they await this new wee one to enter into their loving midst. For the anticipation of new life....*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Andrew, we celebrate the U.S. Supreme Court's historic ruling in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's favor to recognize the U.S. Treaty regarding their land holdings in eastern Oklahoma. For this move toward restorative justice and the promise it offers to other Native American people to receive justice in their dealings with our government...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Pastor Holly, we hold the **people of Norwood** who were hit with 6-inches of rain in an hour and severe flash flooding during the July 5th storm. For the homes, businesses, and automobiles caught in the flooding, the lives disrupted and complicated with a natural disaster during COVID19, and the impact of the Norwood Hospital closing for the next several months to year due to flooding, and all persons impacted by natural events...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Barbara, we rejoice in the delight of creative and artistic pursuits. For the blessings of pour beauty and goodness into the world through imagination and devoted time and effort...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Andrew, Louise, and Ernie, we offer prayers for God's tender mercies to rest with Pastor Daryn, Pastor Holly, and the FBC Needham community. That we remain healthy, safe, in good spirits, and in loving care for each other...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

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 Andrew, we continue to hold his sister **Wendy** as she grieves the death of her beloved family dog. For her 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.

I've Got Your Back...

This Divine visitation grants Jacob an assurance and hope he cannot fathom in the moment when life is full of such chaos, pain, and disarray. Even when Jacob is too caught up in his own greed, fear, and self-preservation, God is there. Jacob awakens with a new clarity and sensitivity to the Divine Presence that pervades every moment of his life.

- How confident am I that no matter what occurs, God is truly present?
- Where am I finding assurance and hope during this pandemic and in the midst of social upheaval, transformation, and chaos in much of life?
- What word of comfort or hope can I offer to someone this week who is suffering, in fear or anxiety, or grieving?
- How may I embody God's Presence to another soul who needs to know they are not alone or abandoned or forgotten this week?

Hymn 443 Trust and Obey TRUST AND OBEY

Born in Brooklyn, New York, John H. Sammis (1846-1919) wrote over 100 hymns in his lifetime. Coming to Christianity in his early 20s, he became involved in the YMCA for a number of years and eventually became a Presbyterian minister in Iowa. Daniel Brink Towner (1850-1919), the hymn's composer, attended a meeting in Brockton, Massachusetts, led by Dwight L. Moody, where a young man testified, "I'm not quite sure, but I'm going to trust, and I'm going to obey." Towner wrote down the sentence and sent it to Sammis, who used it as inspiration for this hymn. Sing or read it aloud as your own assurance and trust of God's continued, pervasive presence. Or sing along with the Vagle Brothers' harmonies online at: https://youtu.be/KB4KcleYiWM.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way! While we do his good will, he abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but our toil he doth richly repay; not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross, but is blest if we trust and obey. [Refrain]

But we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay; for the favor he shows, for the joy he bestows, are for them who will trust and obey. [Refrain]

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side in the way; what he says we will do, where he sends we will go; never fear, only trust and obey. [Refrain]

⁷ https://hymnary.org/person/Sammis John

⁸ http://dianaleaghmatthews.com/trust-and-obey/#.Xw5zw1-Snm0

⁹ Learn more about the Vagle brothers at: http://waglebrothers.com/

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 23th at 6:00 p.m.

Reservations Required!

Preregister ON THURSDAY to attend worship at 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) 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

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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.

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