

First Baptist Church in Needham

858 Great Plain Avenue, Needham MA 02492

www.fbcneedham.org

Meditations for Sunday, July 5, 2020

(or whenever you are so led to pause, reflect, and pray)

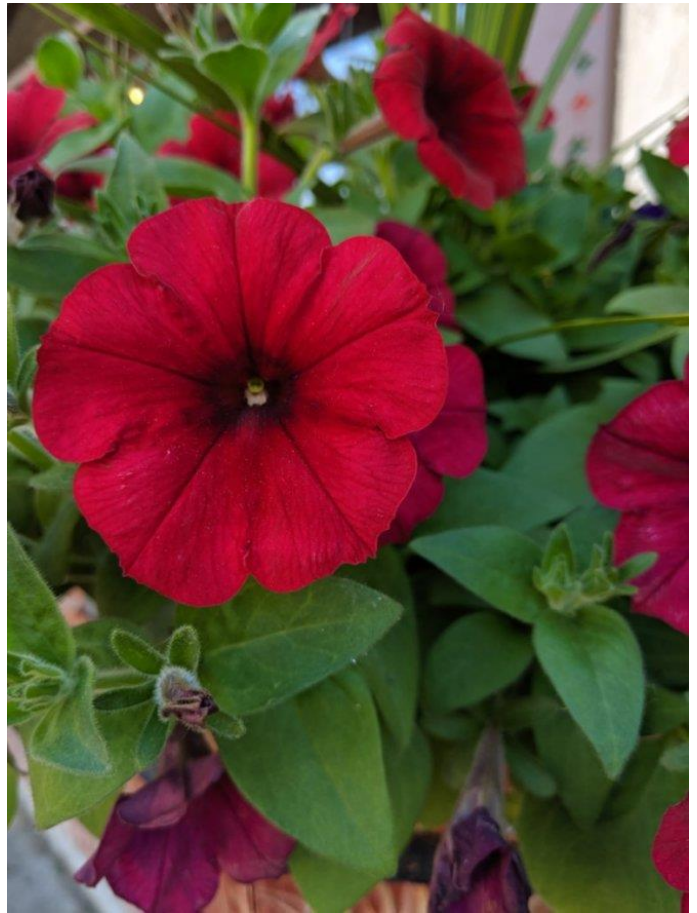
5th Sunday after Pentecost

Edition 16

Lighting the Candle of Life

You may wish to light a candle or use the moonglow 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

“God is above all else, a being of immense beauty. It is this beauty that continues to draw us and enfold us in eternal goodness. This mysterious Beloved is forever wooing us, longing for us to be totally immersed in love of the purest kind. As I look at my life, I count as my greatest blessing the gift of God’s own essence. Being able to know this wondrous God of beauty, being embraced and welcomed home time and again, all of this is truly powerful.

Today: I am enfolded in eternal goodness.”¹

Invitation: *Moving to the next generation in Abraham and Sarah’s family saga, we enter July listening to God’s lovesong to each one of us through the love stories of Isaac and Rebekah and Song of Solomon. Enter this service and consider how and in what manner you find God draws you into God’s own eternal goodness, even in the midst of a most tumultuous, chaotic, and painfully uncertain year.*

¹Joyce Rupp, *Anchors for the Soul: Daily Wisdom for Inspiration and Guidance* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2018), July 5.

Hymn 729

Life Every Voice and Sing

LIFT EVERY VOICE

The poet, novelist, lawyer, and civil rights leader James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) was born in Jacksonville, FL. His work in literature, theatre, education, as a U.S. diplomat, and as the head of the NAACP in the 1920s served to promote the vast array of African-American talent and the Black experience in the U.S. alongside diligent civil rights efforts. One of Johnson's primary initiatives was to get a federal anti-lynching bill passed, which was unsuccessful. Over the next 100 years, the Senate and House of Representative failed to pass such a law despite over 200 attempted bills.

His personal creed was, "I will not allow one prejudiced person or one million or one hundred million to blight my life. I will not let prejudice or any of its attendant humiliations and injustices bear me down to spiritual defeat. My inner life is mine, and I shall defend and maintain its integrity against all the powers of hell."² With this strength of character and spirit in the face of systemic racism, Johnson wrote these words as "a tribute to Black endurance, hope, and religious faith."³ Today, enter into the fullness of the complex story of our shared life together as a people, a society, and as children unto God as you sing, read aloud, or sing along online: <https://youtu.be/58jnoByqPjw>.⁴

Lift ev'ry voice and sing,
till earth and heaven ring,
ring with the harmonies of liberty;
let our rejoicing rise
high as the list'ning skies,
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith
that the dark past has taught us;
sing a song full of the hope
that the present has brought us;
facing the rising sun
of our new day begun,
let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
bitter the chast'ning rod,
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
yet with a steady beat,
have not our weary feet
come to the place for which our people sighed?
We have come over a way

that with tears has been watered;
we have come, treading our path
through the blood of the slaughtered;
out from the gloomy past,
till now we stand at last
where the bright gleam of our bright star is
cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
you who have brought us thus far on the way;
you who have by your might
led us into the light,
keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places,
our God, where we met you;
lest, our hearts drunk with the wine
of the world, we forget you;
shadowed beneath your hand,
may we forever stand,
true to our God, true to our native land.

² <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/james-weldon-johnson>

³ Ibid.

⁴ SNMA Drexel, 2014.

A Reading from Genesis 24:58-67 (NRSV)

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



And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

She said, "I will."

So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes." Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?"

The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

A Reading from Song of Solomon 2:8-13 (NRSV)

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice.

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

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

Hymn 461

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

TRENTHAM

This prayerful hymn is our initial Pentecost response to reading aloud and hearing the word of God in worship.. With voices around the globe, we claim the Spirit's embodied breath as that which sustains and enables us to hear the sacred Word and live into it until all souls are returned to health, safe, respected, and drawn into community. Sing or read it aloud as your prayerful response to the above text, or allow the quartet of voices from St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Houston, TX, wash over you online at

https://youtu.be/3qV_IHByYBk.⁵

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love the way you
love,
and do what you would do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with yours,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with you the perfect life
for all eternity.

Will You ...

The act of consent, this simple imbued respect of asking another person if they are willing to be a party to any action or decision, invites us to consider how such an act may be healing and re-humanizing. Before her brothers would give their blessing to the proposed arranged marriage of their sister Rebekah to Isaac, they sought her willing consent to entertain the contract. She was not to be property exchanged but to be a willing spouse with Isaac. Her humanity and dignity were honored. And the arranged marriage entered willingly and respectfully, became a love-match.

- *When has my consent been assumed or not asked for—a decision made without me? How did this disregard impact my relationships? How did it make me feel within the situation?*
- *Whole groups of people have endured such dehumanizing treatment with little to no societal or community-level regard for their thoughts, opinions, feelings, or preferences. Decisions about where they may live, what work they may seek, what education is available to them, where they are accepted socially, and whether they are accepted in religious communities as leaders or even members have been made often without their ability to speak. As a child of God's enduring goodness, what one action may I do this week to restore another person's ability to give or withhold consent?*

⁵ <https://www.smumc.org/>

Hymn

Near to the Heart of God

MCAFEE

From Missouri, Cleland Boyd McAfee (1866-1944) was a Presbyterian minister, theologian, and hymn writer. He was a professor, choral director, and dean of Park College before serving as pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Chicago and then Lafayette Avenue Church in Brooklyn. Later, he was a professor of systematic theology at McCormick Theological Seminary before leading the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. McAfee wrote this hymn after two of his nieces died from diphtheria.⁶ In the face of grief and untimely death and loss, his words turn us to the eternal goodness of God's comfort and solace as we live in our own time of unknowing. Sing or read these trusting words aloud, or sing along with students from Fountainview Academy in British Columbia, Canada, online at: <https://youtu.be/l4-Jkb3vgSs>.⁷

There is a place of quiet rest,
near to the heart of God,
a place where sin cannot molest,
near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet,
near to the heart of God,
a place where we our Savior meet,
near to the heart of God. [Refrain]

Refrain:

*O Jesus, blest Redeemer,
sent from the heart of God,
hold us, who wait before thee,
near to the heart of God.*

There is a place of full release,
near to the heart of God,
a place where all is joy and peace,
near to the heart of God. [Refrain]

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

"Becoming a witness begins with a gap. In order to see yourself in someone else's eyes and to see the other person, there has to be space between you....Between you and your beloved, you must learn to mind the gap. This means taking a step back and remembering that you do not know or see or feel exactly or precisely what is going on with your partner or even what is going on with yourself."⁸

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.

⁶ https://hymnary.org/person/McAfee_CB

⁷ Fountainview Academy is a Christian high school based in southern British Columbia, Canada. This hymn is from November, 2019. Learn more here: <http://fountainviewacademy.ca>

⁸ Polly Young-Eisendrath, *Love Between Equals: Relationship as a Spiritual Path* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2019), 93-94..

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 country. We hold in prayer the nearly 3 million reported bodies living with or who have survived the coronavirus 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 11 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 stand in memory of the 130,000 souls who have died in our country due to COVID19 so far and for the more than half million 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 Andrew, Marty, Clif, and Bev, Ernie, and Pastor Daryn, we hold **Ernie** in the light of your healing mercy and ask for ease from the side effects of chemotherapy and continued radiation. Grant him restorative rest and continued good spirit as we hold him in great care. We also lift **Helen** to your gentle concern that you ease her pain and grant her restoration from her treatment's ill-effects. With Ernie, we also lift **Ann Cosgrove** whose breast cancer has returned. Grant her your deep peace as she awaits treatment plans and decisions going forward while recovering from surgery. With Andrew, we hold baby **Carmen** to your continued watchcare as she will be monitored for atrial septal heart defect to ensure it closes adequately with time. May she thrive and flourish and her mother, **Wren** find her concerns eased. With Daryn, we hold her **Aunt Lena** hospitalized with heart failure and Daryn's neighbor, **Sal** who has received a cancer diagnosis. Infuse them and their loved one with your pervading peace. 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 conditions...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Marty and Bev, we offer gratitude for the security of our homes and living spaces that allow us to shelter and physically distance with relative comfort. We also hold to your compassionate care souls who face evictions and home insecurity in the coming weeks and months...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Liz, Anthony, Clif, and Harry, we offer gratitude for the opportunity to worship outdoors and the many ways of worship that bring us again and again to deeper awareness of your abiding presence with us...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Harry, Anthony, and Clif, we give thanks for the goodness of gardens and nature...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Jim, we lift in prayer leaders who love and value all people and seek to enact justice and mercy. We also hold to your Spirit's moving persons who fill leadership positions who do not recognize the inherent worth and sacred value of each person for whom they serve. May their hearts and minds be turned to your light and any destructive actions taken be minimized. For our leaders we now name...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*



With Clif, we offer prayer for the ongoing care of our building and its extant needs—both great and small...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

With Ernie, we share abiding love and affection to our FBC Needham community and cherish the numerous ways we care for and are present to each other...*Praise God, from whom all blessing flow....*

With Louise, Bev, and Harry, we celebrate the marvel of technology that enables us to reencounter memories of precious and dear moments with loved ones and connects us daily to friends and family even now...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Bev, John, and Louise, we delight in the joy of being with family, sharing and creating memories together, and for their continued good health and well-being. These days together we cherish...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

With Liz, we rejoice in the creative endeavors of arts and crafting that bring beauty and goodness into everyday living...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow....*

We speak the name of **Elijah McClain** of Aurora, Colorado, a 23-years-old autistic African-American man who died in police custody while walking home in August, 2019. As your Spirit consoles his family and loved ones, we speak his name and call for a cessation of heedless and ongoing death. For his death, the calls for intentional community and law enforcement reform, and the souls directly impacted whose names we now speak...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer....*

For our country in our goodness and longing for goodness, our faults and failings and our beneficence and blessings, our noble ideals and our fractured brokenness. Grant us the strength to do the daily, unending work of healing, restoring, welcoming, and embodying your enduring goodness and pervasive love, Holy One...*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.



Arise, My Love...

The Song of Solomon unabashedly revels in the wonder and fullness of God's love through the poetry of the Lover and the Beloved. In this sensual and joyous exchange, the Lover calls to the Beloved to awaken to a new world, a new existence. Winter is past, and the burgeoning spring and summer offers a bounty of life and delight.

- *As we continue to endure the "winter" of COVID19, am I prepared to respond to God's daily call to arise and see what new life is growing before and within me, even now?*
- *This week, how may I draw upon my being part of the Body of Christ—a Christian—to enable another person to know God loves and delights in them? How may I be known by my love to friend and stranger, alike?*

Hymn 595

They'll Know We are Christians

ST BRENDAN'S

*Peter Scholtes (1938-2009) was born in Evanston, IL, and earned a Masters of Adult Education and Organizational Development from Boston University along with seminary degrees from Quigley and St. Mary of the Lake. Scholtes wrote this hymn "while he was a parish priest at St. Brendan's on the South Side of Chicago in the 1960s. At the time, he was leading a youth choir out of the church basement and was looking for an appropriate song for a series of ecumenical, interracial events. When he couldn't find such a song, he wrote the now-famous hymn in a single day. His experiences at St. Brendan's, and in the Chicago Civil Rights movement, influenced him for the rest of his life."*⁹

On this weekend of celebrating Independence, this hymn reminds us that the freedoms we claim exist in tandem with responsibility to ensure that they are truly and fully available to all people. Indeed, the freedom within the enduring love of Christ enables and requires us to embody that very love, compassion, and responsibility for each soul, each body, each life as we work so that "all unity will one day be restored." Sing or read aloud these words, or sing along with Justin Unger online at: <https://youtu.be/wo4ijOIs6as> ¹⁰

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.
[Refrain] *And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land. [Refrain]

We will work with each other, we will work side by side;
We will work with each other, we will work side by side;
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride. [Refrain]

All praise to the Father, from whom all things come;
And all praise to Christ Jesus, His only Son.
And all praise to the Spirit who makes us one. [Refrain]

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.

⁹ https://hymnary.org/person/Scholtes_P

¹⁰ 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/user/Justinunger/featured>

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 9th at 6:00 p.m.

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>



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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