

First Baptist Church in Needham

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Edition 68



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Worship and Prayer Resource

Sunday, June 27, 2021

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

858 Great Plain Avenue · Needham, MA 02492

www.fbcneedham.org

¹ Photo: "Monk at Prayer" (2015), ©Holly C. Benzenhafer 2021. Use with permission.



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Scripture

Lamentations 3:22-33

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, your mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in God."

The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks God.

It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth,

to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it,

to put one's mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope),

to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults.

For the Lord will not reject forever.

Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Reflection

God is present to us and to the whole of creation in our times of stillness. Dimensions within us are renewed. Restoring energies are given to us in the night.

In sleep we participate in the way of God, for the restfulness of sleep is regenerative. We need to die to the outwardness of the day in order to be renewed within. To enter stillness, whether in sleep or in wakefulness, is to forget at one level in order to remember at another. It is the way a child, for instance, will lie in the grass gazing up into the skies, forgetting everything else. Only by letting go of other thoughts are we able to be present fully to the wonder of the moment.³

³ John Philip Newell, *The Book of Creation: An Introduction to Celtic Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 103-104.

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, we offer our hearts and voices in prayer where we are, entrusting the Spirit's moving among us and responding far beyond our individual reach and influence...

Prayers of Gratitude & Thanksgiving

O God, thank you for each new day and all that it brings. You promise to provide all that I need, caring not only for me, but for all creation and so I rejoice...

With Louise in enthusiastically thanking God for every day we are granted!

With Bev and Marty for the additional ongoing pastoral care, calls, and presence Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly have offered throughout these 15 months of COVID and now as the congregation moves through our transition...

With Barbara in affirming that God walks before us, beside us, and behind us every step of our journey...

With John in celebrating a wonderful Father's Day...

With Marty in gratitude and love for the FBC congregation...

With Louise for companion dogs and cats who have accompanied us through the years and granted us joy with the loving presence...

With Barbara for Clif and Anthony's friendship.

With Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly in celebrating the Exchange Club of Needham awarding Clif with the 2021 Golden Deeds Award, which is presented to a Needham resident in recognition of their history of selfless contributions to the betterment of the town...

Praise God, from whom all blessing flow....

Prayers of Personal Concern, Healing, Solace, & Courage

Faithful God, you know me inside and out, all my hopes and dreams, fears and failures. You hear your children cry out for healing and consolation, courage and strength. Send your Spirit as we seek to follow Jesus's teachings and life's ministry while sharing the concerns of our hearts as I pray...

With Ernie who's strength still flags as he continues recovering from infections, TMJ, and a torn ligament as his Keytruda treatments have begun. And also as he prepares for a CAT scan and to meet with his oncology team in the week ahead...

With Bev and Clif for Marty in her continued recovery and for Chris and Jean as they care for and accompany Marty at home...

With the family and friends of former FBC Needham member, Ruth Long, who died June 22, 2021, that Spirit's abiding peace and consolation surround them as she enters God's nearer presence. .

With Clif for Robin and her dear friend, Cheryl Himmighoefer, as Cheryl enters hospice and Robin and Cheryl's family bear witness with her in this sacred time.

With Bev in her caregiving of Trevor that she have spans of respite and restoration and that Trevor receive relief from his medication and care...

With Clif for Marilyn as she continues to struggle with isolation and declining health and Anne in her continued recovery.

With John, Bev, Clif, Pastor Daryn, and Pastor Holly for the congregation's intentional and prayerful vote this Sunday.

Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer....

Prayers for the Community, Nation, & World

God of compassion and justice, there is so much in the news that is painful, from natural disasters to governmental actions to hunger, poverty, and violence. And there are so many instances of lovingkindness, beauty, and hope. Move among your creation and your children, as I pray...

With the people of Palestine and Israel as they continue to live in instability and upheaval...

With the people of Afghanistan and Hong Kong as their stability and security continues to be in flux...

With the people of India and around the world who remain unvaccinated for COVID and who have limited access to vaccines and/or medical treatment...

With transgender persons who endure continued prejudice and discrimination and remain the targets of political jockeying as their safety, wellbeing, and full dignity are treated as pawns to play or sacrifice in our political system.

With people of Asian descent and BIPOC who continue to experience hatred, harm, and direct and indirect violence embedded in the history and ongoing narrative of white supremacy in our country ...

For the moving of your Spirit in hope and healing throughout our world, praise God, from whom all blessings flow ... And for your enduring presence, justice, and mercy in our brokenness, Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer....

Concluding the Prayer

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

+++ Offer your own prayers here. +++

Hear my prayer, O Lord...as I pray the prayer your son taught us saying:

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.



First Baptist Church in Needham

One in the Spirit, One with Our Neighbors

American Baptist Churches USA

858 Great Plain Avenue
Needham, MA 02492

www.fbcneedham.org
churchoffice@fbcneedham.org
781-400-5867

Sunday, June 6, 2021

Beloved Community,

As your pastors, we intend to convey in this letter the sentiments of the *Creative Callings* Discernment Process participants who, with the approval of the Administration Ministry, present the included motion for your prayerful consideration and vote in a specially called congregational meeting on Sunday, June 27, 2021:

In 2018-2019, the First Baptist Church in Needham congregation conducted a series of preliminary meetings which led to our decision to enter into an intentional vocational discernment process through Boston University School of Theology's grant-funded project, *Creative Callings*, in 2019. After delays and adjustments due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we implemented our intentional contemplative discernment process regarding the future of First Baptist Church in Needham with a retreat in October, 2020, followed by regular weekly meetings by Zoom. The congregation was kept abreast of the process with regular mailings, pastoral calls, and ongoing invitations to participate. We first met in November-December, 2020, with Congregational Partners who shared their stories of how their congregations faithfully moved through times of similar transition, creating space for new possibilities and places of community for their members and their properties/resources. In January-February, 2021, we then met with Community Partners in Needham who shared both the needs in our local community and the varied and creative ways in which they are addressing these needs. Since April, 2021, we have met weekly for our current session, "Intentional Decisions: Faithfully Stepping Forward," to consider and discern our congregational wellness and lay leadership capacity, the best use of our physical resources for the Needham community, and future possibilities. This entire intentional and prayerful process culminates in the recommendation now brought to the congregation.

Throughout these months – October, 2020, to the present – the members of the *Creative Callings* Discernment Process have faithfully gathered weekly during each

session in deep discernment of the will of God for this congregation. Six of our congregational lay leaders devoted themselves to the time and concerted effort needed to regularly participate in the *Creative Callings* Discernment Process: Elizabeth Mercer, Nancy Twombly, Andrew Thoresen, Clif Holbrook, and Mark and Peggy Hellberg. We are also grateful for the presence and leadership of Ernie Steeves who participated in the initial phases of discernment through *Creative Callings* with Boston University in 2018-2019. The group drew upon the gifts offered by our *Creative Callings* Coach, Rev. Mark Slaughter, ethnographer Nathan Smith, and our Pastors, Rev. Daryn Stylianopoulos and Rev. Dr. Holly Benzenhafer who shepherded the process and held space for the group discernment each week and individually. Rev. Marlene Gil, Associative Executive Minister for Congregational Relations with The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts (TABCOM) also gave of her time to serve as a denominational observer and resource to the Discernment Process. We have prayed, reflected, and listened deeply to our Partners and even more to our congregation's needs, abilities, and realities. We do not come lightly to the motion presented. It has been hard, emotional, and draining work. It is also faithful work that has been attended with great care and prayer each week. It is also not unanimous work. The motion brought by the members of the *Creative Callings* Discernment Process was determined with a vote of 6 in favor and 1 opposed. That said, we are unanimous in our concern for the ongoing care and wellbeing of the congregation's members going forward.

Thus, the participants of the *Creative Callings* Discernment Process, with the approval of the Administration Ministry bring this motion trusting that nothing can separate us from the love of God, whose Spirit binds us together. We are and will always be connected in love as part of God's community and the Body of Christ in the world. First Baptist Church in Needham has offered a community of faith and a space in which we have been nurtured and formed in our faith and practice. We hold the journey of First Baptist Church in Needham, our life and service together, in our hearts and in communion with each other wherever our individual paths take us – just as the people who have claimed identity with this congregation have done across the decades of coming and going: some in life-long membership, some for a span of years, and still others for only a season. We have come to a point in our congregation's life and sustainability, however, that requires us to take steps that are faithful, if hard, for a future hope we cannot fully yet see. This recommendation is brought as an act of faith, along with pastoral care, and deep trust that the Spirit is indeed moving within each member of First Baptist Church in Needham preparing us to live fully into the future with hope as we take the next step.

In Christ, your Pastors,



Rev. Daryn Stylianopoulos



Rev. Dr. Holly C. Benzenhafer

Previous Notice for a Special Business Meeting

A special business meeting will occur during the worship hour on Sunday, June 27, 2021, for the sole purpose to vote on the motion to dissolve presented below as recommended by the participants of the *Creative Callings* Discernment Process and approved and presented by the Administration Ministry.

MOTION TO DISSOLVE

That First Baptist Church in Needham (hereinafter the “Church”) be dissolved, and that the Administration Ministry of the Church shall be authorized, in its discretion and without a further meeting, vote or action of or by the Church, to take such steps and actions as are appropriate and/or necessary to commence, effectuate and conclude the dissolution of the Church, including, but not limited to the disposition of any and all property of the Church, real or personal, upon such terms and conditions as the Administration Ministry may deem appropriate, all in accordance with such laws and regulations as may govern or be applicable to such dissolution, and the review and approval of any documents in connection with such dissolution and/or to effectuate such dissolution, all such documents and submissions to be in such form and content as the Administration Ministry may, in the exercise of its sound discretion, deem to be in furtherance of such dissolution, and further that Clifton Holbrook as Chairman of the Administration Ministry be authorized to execute any document in connection with such dissolution; all in such form as he shall approve, and his execution thereof shall be sufficient evidence of his approval.

Announcements

Our **church office** is open for our Office Manager, Robin Bevilacqua. We are encouraging limited visits to the church building, and all who visit are required to mask, sign-in, and socially distance. **If you need to speak with Robin, please call ahead if you can.** Pastoral and other church 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 Resource & Calls of Caring

You are encouraged to make use of the Worship Resources and to find other meaningful opportunities for worship and reflection, Zoom services, or other spiritually enriching means of communing with God and community during this time of social distancing. Contact Pastor Daryn or Pastor Holly if you need help finding links to join other online services.

Offering

Your continued financial support of the daily work and ministries of FBC Needham is vital. Offerings can be turned in during Worship on the Lawn, through the church website online, or via mail. May the act of giving be a spiritual practice that accompanies your daily prayer and worship.

Mail Checks to:

First Baptist Church in Needham
858 Great Plain Avenue,
Needham MA 02492

Online:

Go to <https://www.fbcneedham.org>
Click the **Take Action** link & follow the directions.

Make checks payable to: First Baptist Church in Needham.
Please indicate it is your offering or pledge on the check

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Worship & Special Business Meeting In the Sanctuary

Sunday, June 27, 2021
10:00 a.m.

COVID protocols – masks and physical distancing – remain in place.

We will gather in the sanctuary in worship and prayer this Sunday as we prepare our hearts and minds to conduct the work of the congregation through a Special Business Meeting during the worship hour.

Planning to Attend? Pre-register at: www.fbcneedham.org/worship-ministries

Services are also recorded and posted on our website for later viewing at:
www.fbcneedham.org/outdoor-worship

This Sunday Marks Our Last Regular Sunday Morning Worship Service.

We plan to gather once a month on Sunday evenings for prayerful worship and communion beginning September 12, 2021.

Members are encouraged to begin exploring new congregational communities and will be afforded pastoral accompaniment in their discernment from Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly upon request.