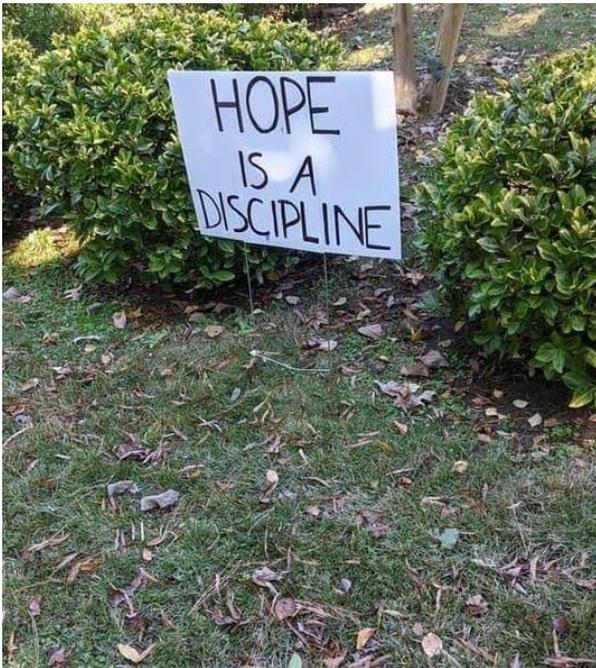


November 8th
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 27)



“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” - **Cornel West**

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.” - **The Talmud**

“Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.”
- **Frederick Douglass**

“You must first be awake to be aware.”
- **Lailah Gifty Akita**

“Hope is a state of mind independent of the state of the world. If your heart's full of hope, you can be persistent when you can't be optimistic. You can keep the faith despite the evidence, knowing that only in so doing has the evidence any chance of changing. So while I'm not optimistic, I'm always very hopeful.” - **William Sloane Coffin**

“The transformative power of love is the foundation of all meaningful social change. Without love our lives are without meaning.” - **bell hooks**

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE: "Andantino" by E.H. Lamare *Patty Meyer*

GREETING/WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Good morning and welcome! My name is Elisa Lucozzi and I am pastor to the Beloved Community that is Guilford Community Church. We're so glad you have joined us this morning.

You may not know but in order to have worship prepared for Sunday, I record most of the service on Wednesday morning. That's right, today is November 4th. The day after the most historic days of voting in more than a generation. At the time of this recording, we do not know who has been elected to the office of the President. We may still not know by the time Sunday

comes. But, today it felt important to acknowledge that even if we know by the time this service is broadcast, there are still likely to be feelings of anxiety, relief, exhaustion or grief. The service will be a little different today – filled with more times of prayer, music and poetry as well as readings from Scripture. I invite you to give yourself to it, that it might soothe you, encourage you, and strengthen you for whatever the outcome is, whether we know it in this moment or not.

Especially now, because there is such a rise of cases of COVID, and because we want to model caring for one another in a way that we hope will inspire others, we continue to gather online. Although it is hard to be physically distant from one another, we also know that it can't keep our hearts from connecting and we know it is indeed the best way of caring for one another right now. Let us keep creating new ways of being church, because we know that being church has nothing to do with a building and everything to do with loving each other. Let us gather to be the church in a new way, with a welcome wide enough for all.

Annual Meeting & Pie Sale

So, as we begin today, let us acknowledge and honor this land we occupy, by honoring and acknowledging those First Nation people to whom this land belongs:

We gather here on the bank of the Broad Brook
In the shadow of the great Mount Wantastiquet
In the valley of the rushing Connecticut
to worship and discern together the call of God
to the United Church of Christ for these days,
let us know that we do so on the hunting grounds
and homelands of the Mahican and Penacook people,
as well as the southernmost members of the Abenaki
Tribe.

These people used this land since time immemorial
and are still among us in the present.
We offer them our gratitude and respect,
Our repentance and hope in solidarity with them...

**It is a Holy Communion we share of life on earth,
of past and present, of pain and reconciliation,
of mystery and majesty...let us begin.**

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES AND SILENT MEDITATION

INTROIT: “Be Still and Know That I Am God” *led by Mary Alice Amidon with the GCC
Virtual Choir - <https://youtu.be/2HKSKYpF29c>*

CALL TO WORSHIP: Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell on her [Rev-o-lution](#) blog.

Are you awake? Are you alert?
Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

Are you watching the signs?
Are you interpreting what is happening today?
Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

Do you see opportunities for ministry?
Do you see the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the needy?
Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

Come, let us worship and let us work in the reign of God.
Christ has extended the invitation:
let us work together in the reign of God on earth.

OPENING HYMN: #515 “This is My Song” (Finlandia) harmony Jean Sibelius, poetry Lloyd Stone *GCC Virtual Choir*

This is My Song

FINLANDIA, harm. Jean Sibelius
poetry Lloyd Stone©1934

1 This is my song O God of all the na-tions; A song of
My coun-try's skies are blu-er than the o-cean And sun-light

6 Peace for lands a-far and mine. This is my home, the
streams on clo-ver leaf and pine But o-ther lands have

11 coun-try where my heart is; Here are my hopes, my dreams, my ho-ly
sun-light too and clo-ver And skies are e-very-where as blue as

16 shrine. But o-ther hearts in o-ther lands are bea-ting,
mine O hear my song, thou God of all the na-tions

21 With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.
A song of peace for their land and for mine.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION: by Molly Brewer (adapted)

My beloved people,
I cannot pretend,
And so I will not tell you,
That everything is okay right now.
That there is no reason to be angry,
That you must be optimistic
Or at peace.

I cannot tell you that even if everything is ok for you that it is ok for those around you. Not even if I pretend.

I cannot pretend these things,
And so I won't tell them to you.
And so all I ask in this moment is that we remember the words by Rev. Rebecca Parker:
There is a Love.
There is a Love holding us.
There is a Love holding all.

Let us rest in this Love.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION – CENTERING PRAYER:

(inspired by Romans 8:22-27) by Amy Loving

The Apostle Paul tells us that the Spirit of God prays for us
“with sighs too deep for words”.
Through the Life-Giving Breath of God,
we are given all that we need.
Let us breathe deeply—
inhaling the good gifts that God provides,
and exhaling all of the things that we need to release.

Let us breathe in strength
and, let us exhale our exhaustion.

Let us breathe in freedom
and, let us exhale all that holds us back.

Let us breathe in a new sense of direction
and, let us exhale the paths we no longer want to use.

Let us breathe in hope
and, let us exhale self-doubt.

Let us breathe in unconditional love
and, let us exhale distrust and hate.

Holy Spirit, let us feel the mighty rush of your presence in this place.
Blow away our fears and worries,
and help us to breathe in your gifts of new life. Amen.

CHILDREN’S STORY: “Whoever You Are” by Mem Fox

PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN

SCRIPTURE: *JoEllen Tarallo*

Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. ¹¹Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Reflection: We begin our reflections this morning with this odd little parable from Jesus. Jesus had a way of using stories to try and teach us, and sometimes I want to just say to Jesus: “Can’t you just tell us what you want us to know?” I’m not sure how he’d answer that. Sometimes I choose readings for a specific occasion or event. However, this Gospel was the one prescribed for this Sunday. What might it tell us for this time we find ourselves in? First, it is a tale of wisdom and foolishness. Those who are called wise are prepared, those considered foolish are not. Those who are considered wise prepare, but they prepare by hoarding all the oil, so while they are called wise, they can’t be called compassionate or generous. Those who are considered foolish are called foolish, because they are “lazy” and didn’t want to do the work to get the oil, or is it because they simply don’t have the means or access to the oil like the five “wise” bridesmaids? We are in a time where we are being called to not only be wise but to be compassionate and generous. There are too many whose lamps are dim for lack of oil, lack of food, lack of healthcare, lack of a safe home, work or a means to travel. There are too many who are standing outside of the doors to the banquet asking to be let in, to be invited to share in the abundance that lays behind those closed doors. We are being called to let go of our foolish ways that would have us believe that the work ahead isn’t ours to do, that we can just leave it to others – elected officials, our government, or social service organizations. This foolishness would have us believe that the work of dismantling the systemic racism and oppression that exists in this country doesn’t belong to us, but if you are “woke” you know that it is on us. It is hard. It is hard to keep our eyes open when what is in front of us is so hard to see, and especially hard to look at. But it is the only way that those banquet doors will open for everyone. So, “keep awake therefore” because you do not know when you may be called on to use your gifts and skills to

help manifest the kin-dom of God on earth. It may even be right now.

Poem: “The Breeze at Dawn” by Rumi

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

Musical Reflection: #612 “Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness” James K. Manley, 1978.

Patty Meyer piano, Connie Woodberry, Patty Meyer, Andy Davis, Perrin Scott, Jack Wesley, Peter Amidon vocals

Romans 8:22-27

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Reflection: All through this past week, in all my interactions with clergy colleagues, nearly every conversation has in one way or another been about hope. It doesn't always go as you might expect. As pastors, we are expected to be the “town criers” for hope: hope's ceaseless cheerleaders. But, I wouldn't be honest with you if I didn't tell you that many of us who preach the good news, were struggling with holding on to hope this week, were struggling with how to pray this week. Then my colleague and friend Susie Webster-Toleno, posted a photo on Facebook that she had seen on another colleague's page. Turns out it was Jeremy Kirk's page. Yes, the same Jeremy who is a Member in Discernment here at GCC. The photo was of a handmade lawn sign pushed into the ground, surrounded by fallen, dead and dried up leaves, which read: “hope is a discipline”. Hope IS a discipline. It requires dreaming, like Joseph in his coat of many colors, or like Bayard Rustin, the black, gay man whose idea it was to march on Washington, D.C., when the powers of oppression would try to silence the voices calling for freedom. It requires being willing to give a dream, voice, like Martin at that same march. It is an action word. The hope which requires us to dig deep. Because, just like we cannot only pray and expect things to change, we cannot just hope and think that things will be better. We need to make hope visible with our actions. It depends on being able to see what points us to goodness, kindness and love, even when everything in front of us is showing us the complete opposite.

Hope, by its very nature, is about planting ourselves firmly in an Easter mindset. It is about seeing resurrection, even when there is only an empty tomb before us.

Poem: “To Carry A Dream” by Rev. Sarah Are

To carry a dream Is to walk at night,
Or to walk by light,
But with a pebble in your shoe.
To carry a dream is to
Wake at night
To wake and blink twice,
In case you see something new.
To carry a dream Is to plant trees in old age,
To be a part of a church,
That is human and frayed.
To carry a dream is foolish and wild.
It’s the faith of a child,
Wishing on stars.
But to carry a dream is also hopeful and wise
The faith of our elders,
Saying God will provide.
So may we walk
Until we see the light.
May the pebble in our shoe
Remind us why we fight.
May they say
We are foolish and unwise,
And may we continue to dream;
May hope keep us alive.

Musical Reflection: “We Shall Not Be Moved” African American spiritual
Terry Sylvester lead vocals, Peter & Mary Alice Amidon vocal harmonies, Peter banjo/piano, Stefan Amidon bass

Amos 5:18-24

Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord! Why do you want the day of the Lord? It is darkness, not light; ¹⁹as if someone fled from a lion and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. ²⁰Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. ²³Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. ²⁴But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Reflection: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” More than likely, your closest affiliation with those words came from the mouth of Rev. Dr. King, but this is where in the Bible he got it from. The final passage for today is from the prophet Amos, and you know what they say about prophets not being welcomed in their own homeland. Why? Because prophets often tell us things that we don’t want to hear. Amos is describing “the day of the Lord”. He is talking to the people of Israel about a day of reckoning, when not only will Israel’s enemies be held accountable for their actions, but Israel itself. Now, I’m not a fire and brimstone kind of preacher. I don’t believe in that kind of theology, but I do know that with every action comes a consequence and those actions require us to hold ourselves accountable.

As you know by now, I like to collect quotes, small nuggets of wisdom that help inspire or motivate, or sometimes that capsulize some profound truth. This week, there are two that I have come back to repeatedly. The first, “We have no peace because we have forgotten that we belong to each other”, a quote from Mother Teresa. In that forgetting, we have put a stone in that stream of righteousness and justice. According to the Prophet, we have even gotten off course believing that if we “do” worship “correctly” or offer exactly the right things, then we’ve gotten it right. Here’s the hardest one, “Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps”. What happened to “make a joyful noise”? I think the lesson that Amos is trying to teach us here is this – if there isn’t a connection between our worship and being about the work of justice in the world, then we are misguided and off course.

Here is the other quote I’ve been thinking about all week, “Justice is what love looks like in public” written by Cornel West. God’s justice is most certainly about love. It is about standing for and with those who others would forget or cast aside, as his son modeled for us. So, I say, let love roll down like an ever-flowing stream and wash over us all, Baptizing us and reminding us once again that we are God’s Beloved and we are called to help others know that they are as well.

Poem: “I Look at the World” by Langston Hughes

I look at the world
From awakening eyes in a black face—
And this is what I see:
This fenced-off narrow space
Assigned to me.

I look then at the silly walls
Through dark eyes in a dark face—
And this is what I know:
That all these walls oppression builds
Will have to go!

I look at my own body
With eyes no longer blind—
And I see that my own hands can make
The world that’s in my mind.

Then let us hurry, comrades,
The road to find.

HYMN: #505 “Let Justice Flow Like Streams”

Patty Meyer piano; Tom and Connie Green, Tony & Margaret Dale Barrand, vocals

PASTORAL PRAYER: “The Merger Poem” *by Judy Chicago*

And then all that has divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again

ANTHEM: “Swimming to the Other Side” by Pat Humphries

Peter Amidon piano; Mary Alice Amidon, Robin Davis, Fred Breunig, Sue Owings, Rachel Johnson, Peter Amidon vocals

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

This is the time in our service where I invite your prayers – prayers of concern or sorrow, prayers of celebration and joy. If you have something or someone you would like our gathering to pray for, you can type it into the comments section that accompanies this live feed.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: *Cheryl Redmond and Merrill Spiller*

Let us begin this prayer by praying not just for our nation, but also for the world and all its leaders. May leaders of nations have the courage to walk the path of peace together, so that the most vulnerable in their lands may live in safety, with dignity and hope. May those chosen to lead, be granted a spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and knowledge, fortitude, right judgment, patience, and kindness. Let us pray for our nation in this time of discernment, election, and transition.

Let us pray for our nation and for every one of us so infected with the virus of racism. May we have the courage now, finally, once and for all, to face our own complacency and dismantle the systems of oppression that keep us *all* from truly being free.

Let us pray for the ones most affected by the choices we make.
In all we do, may we keep the merciful face of Christ ever before us,
who is seen in those who are poor, refugees, or migrants,
those who are sick or without homes, those without food or work,
and those whose lives are unvalued.

Let us pray for all who are facing a time of struggle or unknowing. We offer up prayers for those who have recently received a diagnosis that is life-threatening or life changing, those who have just had surgery or who are awaiting surgery, those who are awaiting test results and diagnosis. May they find your Comfort and Presence in this time of suffering.

For those, who, struggling daily with a chronic illness, cancer or other life threatening illnesses, mental illness or addiction. Give them peace and health.

For those who are grieving the loss of a spouse, any family member, friend or a pet. Give them comfort.

We pray for the 238,656 in our country and the over one million worldwide who have died from the Corona virus, every single soul precious, every single one someone's heart. May their families and loved ones, friends and colleagues, know some measure of comfort as they grieve. May they know that they do not grieve alone. For all those struggling with this horrible virus – fighting for their lives in ICU or in their homes. May they know healing. For those who have been tested and are waiting for their results - we offer prayers of comfort. We pray for all those risking their very lives to care for those who are ill.

Through this time of unknowing, this time of transition, may we learn to love each other despite our differences and focus on the work that continues beyond this election:
the work of justice, respect for one another and peace in our land. The work of love.

Now let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us using whatever words help us to embody its promise. May we bring about one small glimpse of the (kingdom) of God, a kin-dom where all are well, all are fed and free, where all are whole, where all know love, where *all* are beloved.

Let us pray: Our Father, (Our Father/Mother, Our Creator) who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom (kin-dom) come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom (kin-dom) and the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: Hymn #278 “Hear Our Prayer, Oh Lord”

OFFERTORY

CALL TO OFFERING

Supporting the church and the mission of the church is more important than ever. You can still send in your weekly offerings to the church via US mail 38 Church Dr. Guilford, VT 05301 or

consider using our online "offering plate" by going to the church's website and clicking the PayPal donation button on the home page. So now let us gather up all these offerings as well as the offering of our time and talents and dedicate them to continuing the work of our still speaking God.

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of grace,
we know you want justice rolling down like water.
Accept these gifts from our hands,
which we cast upon the waters of your love,
a generous, ever-flowing stream
feeding the hungry and
helping those in need.
Accept these gifts for the work of Your church. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: #500 "O, For a World" music: Carl Gotthelf Glaser, 1828; adopt. Lowell Mason 1839; words: Miriam Therese Winter, 1987 *Patty Meyer piano; Tom Yahner, Patrice Murray, Cathy Hess vocals*

COMMISSIONING & BLESSING: by Michael Leunig and Canon Ed Rodman

God help us to change.
To change ourselves and to change our world.
To know the need for it.
To deal with the pain of it.
To feel the joy of it.
To undertake the journey without understanding the destination.
The art of gentle revolution.
Amen.

"Let there be peace among us and let us not be instruments of our own or others oppression."

THREE-FOLD AMEN

POSTLUDE: "Allegro from Sonata in F Major K. 332" W.A. Mozart *Patty Meyer*

For further prayer and reflection

[Let Justice Rain by The Many](#)

[Try to Remember by Shruti Ganguly](#)

[America the Beautiful: 2020](#)

Award winning Bluegrass vocalist Claire Lynch and award-winning Blues/Gospel vocalist Lea Gilmore perform a stunningly soul-filled duet of my revised and updated "America the Beautiful: 2020".

[A Beautiful Noise by Alicia Keys and Brandi Carlisle](#)