



# The United Parish in Brookline

American Baptist • United Church of Christ • United Methodist



## March 29, 2020 Fifth Sunday in Lent Discernment: Finding Clarity in the Chaos Finding Our Purpose

*Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves,  
like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue.  
Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them.  
And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now.  
Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.*

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet* #4

### GATHERING MUSIC

*We transition into our sacred time together as music invokes the spirit of God.*

Susan DeSelms  
Minister of Music

### INTROIT

*We enter worship with a musical call.*

*Give Me Jesus*

*African-American Traditional*

Kimberly Ayers  
former Soprano Section Leader

**\*CHIMING THE TRINITY \*** means we invite you to rise in body and spirit (even while you're watching at home!)  
*We call forth God the Creator, Savior and Holy Spirit in musical tones.*

**\*LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

*We bring the light of Christ into our sacred space.*

One: May Christ, the Light of the World:

All: **Enlighten our hearts with Love.**

**\*OPENING HYMN**

*Wash O God, Our Sons and Daughters*

BEACH SPRING

*We lift our voices, bodies, minds and spirits as a community in a song of praise.*

*We invite you to sing, speak or silently read the words together.*

*Wash, O God, our sons and daughters, where your cleansing waters flow.  
Number them among Your people; Bless as Christ blessed long ago.  
Weave them garments bright and sparkling; Compass them with love and light,  
Fill, anoint them; send Your Spirit, Holy dove and heart's delight.*

*We who bring them long for nurture; By your milk may we be fed.  
Let us join Your feast, partaking Cup of blessing, living bread.  
God, renew us, guide our footsteps; Free from sin and all its snares,  
One with Christ in living, dying, By Your Spirit, children, heirs.*

*O how deep Your holy wisdom! Unimagined, all Your ways!  
To Your name be glory, honor! With our lives we worship, praise!  
We Your people stand before You, Water washed and Spirit born.  
By Your grace, our lives we offer, Recreate us; God, transform!*

**GREETINGS**

*We warmly welcome all into our midst.*

Kent French and Amy Norton  
Senior and Associate Pastors

One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

**CENTERING PRAYER** *in unison*

*We center ourselves in the awareness of God's presence.*

God of Love,  
to you all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from you no secrets are hid:

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**PSALM**

Psalm 42

Josaphat Contreras, Cantor

*We set our intention for worship by hearing the words of the Psalmist,  
and responding together in song.*

*Assistant Music Director*

Psalm will appear on screen.

The cantor will sing the Response (*R*) the first time alone;  
please join singing at home the second time.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** *in unison, based on the Prayer of Saint Francis*

*Together, we confess the ways we have gotten out of step with God and seek to re-center ourselves in the Love of God.*

**Lord, make us instruments of your peace.**

**Where we have sown the seeds of hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, let us sow pardon;  
where there is discord, union;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.**

**Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.**

**For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we  
are born to eternal life...**

**SILENT CONFESSION**

*We continue praying in silence for up to one minute for our personal confessions and spiritual centering.*

**One:** O God, in your compassion;

**All:** Hear our prayer.

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *please rise*

*We receive the Good News that we are loved, forgiven and renewed in God's presence.*

**\*THE PEACE** *We share this Good News among ourselves with words of Peace and Love,  
while we bump elbows, bow to one another, or make the Peace sign.*

**One:** The Peace of Christ and the Love of God be with you always;

**All:** And also with you.

**\*PEACE RESPONSE**

*We re-gather with our voices in song.*

*Return Again*  
by Shlomo Carlebach

Led by Ania Kokocinsky

*Return again, return again,  
Return to the land of your soul. (repeat)*

*Return again, return again,  
Return to the land of your soul.*

*Return to who you are,  
Return to what you are,  
Return to where you are born and reborn again*

*Lai lai lai lai...*

**READING FROM THE PROPHETS**

*We reflect together on the writings of the truth-tellers of the Jewish faith.*

Jeremiah 29:10-14

Ramiro Martinez  
Church Council Member

One: The wisdom of God for the people of God;  
All: **Thanks be to God!**

**READING FROM THE EPISTLES**

*We reflect together on the correspondence of the early Church.*

Romans 8:18-39

Amy Norton  
Associate Pastor

One: For the Word of God in scripture,  
For the Word of God in Spirit,  
For the Word of God among us;  
All: **Thanks be to God!**

**\*READING FROM THE GOSPEL**

*We reflect together on stories from the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.*

John 21:15-19

One: For the Good News of Jesus Christ;  
All: **Thanks be to God!**

**MESSAGE**

*We reflect together on how the Word of God plays out in our lives.*

Finding our Purpose

Kent French  
Senior Pastor

**HYMN**

*We reflect on the message  
in poetry and song.*

*O Savior, Let Me Walk with You*

New Century Hymnal #503  
MARYTON



## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*We pray together for our congregation, our surrounding community,  
the nation and the world.*

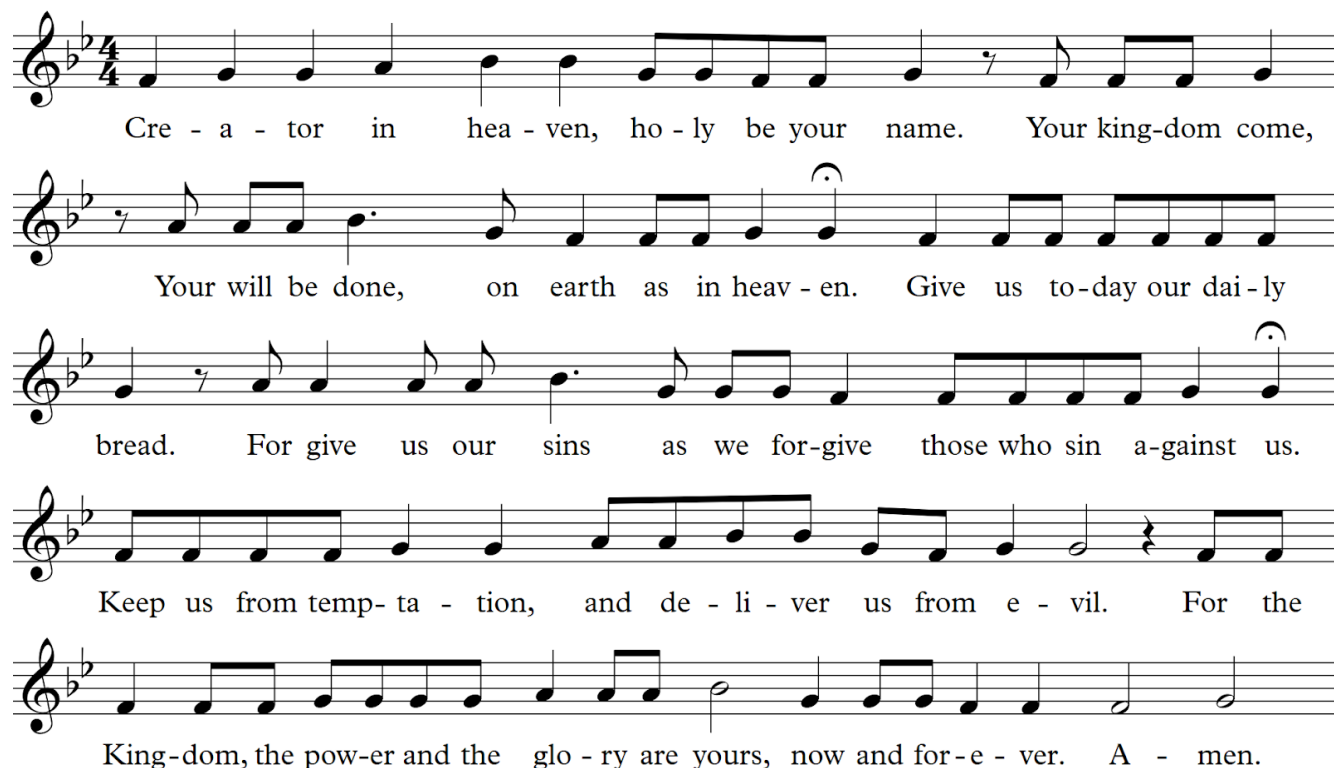
Amy Norton  
Associate Pastor

One: O God, hear our prayer,  
All: **And guide us in your love.**

**LORD'S PRAYER** *We say together the prayer Jesus taught us.*

Taizé Chant

*We invite you to use your chosen words for Creator, singing instead: Our Father, Our Mother, Sustainer, Redeemer or...*



Cre - a - tor in hea - ven, ho - ly be your name. Your king-dom come,  
Your will be done, on earth as in heav - en. Give us to-day our dai - ly  
bread. For give us our sins as we for-give those who sin a-against us.  
Keep us from temp- ta - tion, and de - li - ver us from e - vil. For the  
King-dom, the pow-er and the glo - ry are yours, now and for - e - ver. A - men.

**OFFERING** *We offer our gifts for God's service and our visitor cards. No gift is too small or too large. All are precious.*

### Invitation

*We hear from community members about why they take part.*

Jack Lilburn  
Communications Ministry Team & Usher

### Offertory Anthem

*We offer our gifts as our  
musicians offer a song of  
praise and thanksgiving.*

God's Eye is On the Sparrow  
by Civilla D. Martin and Charles H. Gabriel

Merle Perkins, singer  
Youth Choir Co-Director

### \*Doxology

*Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow  
We sing a song of praise and thanksgiving as we bring forth our gifts.*

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God the source of all our gifts!  
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

**\*Prayer of Dedication** *We ask God's blessing over the gifts.*

Jaz Buchanan  
Seminarian

**\*CLOSING HYMN**

*God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens*

New Century Hymnal, #556

*Together in song, we set our intention in leaving this sacred space.*

**HOLY MANNA**

*God, who stretched the spangled heavens, infinite in time and place,  
Flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space;  
We, your children, in your likeness, share inventive powers with you;  
Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.*

*We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;  
Known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;  
Probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power,  
Facing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.*

*As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew,  
Children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.  
May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor, well begun;  
Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one.*

**\*BENEDICTION**

*We receive a blessing as we prepare to depart this sacred gathering.*

**\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE**

*Blessed Be The Tie That Binds*

Congregation

*We respond to the blessing we have just received.*

*Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian Love,  
The sharing of a common life is like to that above.*

Join us for Zoom Coffee Hour, 12-1pm

<https://zoom.us/j/706296570?pwd=TldoMDRBNWlUb1FrVUZlejRBUGYxdz09>

Meeting ID: 706 296 570

Password: 001841

One tap mobile

646.558.8656

Meeting ID: 706 296 570

Or find your local number at

<https://zoom.us/u/ad7hylYCtT>

# WELCOME

We at the United Parish in Brookline believe that all people are made in the image of God and embrace and cherish every person and every kind of family. Jesus Christ welcomed everyone; we seek to follow his example in our own life and worship, by extending God's love and grace abundantly and equally to everyone. We affirm and welcome all people to share in worship, fellowship and leadership with us, to join us in a diversity of race, gender, sexual identity, physical and mental ability, ethnicity and economic means.

We have joined with other Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ) and Welcoming and Affirming (American Baptist Churches USA), as well as with the Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Churches) to declare that we are and will remain open to all people.

We invite you to consider becoming a member of the United Parish family. You may become a member by transferring membership or by a statement of faith. If you desire to retain ties with a former church, we invite you to become an associate or affiliate member for the time you are with us.

*We ask that you silence all electronic devices.*

*Please see an usher if you would like a hearing assistive device.*

*Because our building is open to the public,  
an adult should accompany children if/when they leave the worship service.*

Ministers  
Senior Pastor  
Associate Pastor  
Seminarian  
Minister of Music  
Assistant Music Director  
Communications and Office Administrator  
Building Usage Coordinator  
Accounting Administrator  
Nursery Supervisor  
Pastor Emerita

The People of the United Parish  
Kent French  
Amy Norton  
Jasmine Buchanan  
Susan DeSelms  
Josaphat Contreras  
Sarah Fitzpatrick  
Helen Hassinger  
Donald Firth  
Jenna Bergquist  
Patricia Coughlin



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## Discernment: Finding Clarity in the Chaos

### Week 5: Finding a Purpose

#### *Take-home questions*

These are some questions and ideas for you to reflect further on today's worship and to join us in our collective Lenten study of Discernment.

*For thus says the Lord:*

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,  
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.  
Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.  
When you search for me, you will find me;  
if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord,  
and I will restore your fortunes  
and gather you from all the nations  
and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord,  
and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.*

#### Questions for Further Reflection

If you were to look back over your life thus far and say what God's plans have been, what would you come up with?

Have there been times when your plans didn't align with what God (or Life) gave you?

How did you respond in the moment?

How do you explain it now?

In retrospect, how do you think God was using you and your gifts in that moment?

## Finding Our Purpose

How do you define 'purpose'?

Who are people you've seen who have a clear sense of purpose?

How could you tell?

What did their lives and actions look like?

When have you felt a clear sense of purpose?

What made it clear?

What did it feel like in your heart and body when you were truly 'on purpose'?

How can you imagine God is calling you to purpose in this moment?

## Some suggested practices for the week ahead

These are some easy-to-try spiritual practices that can help you as you launch into a season of discernment. Feel free to pick and choose, experiment and see how they feel and then report back to us next week. You are welcome to join us in study groups after Sunday worship in Lent or other times. Check out the homepage link at the bottom of the page.

## Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina (literally divine reading) is a way of becoming immersed in the Scriptures very personally. It draws on the way Jews read the Haggadah, a text read during Passover that retells the Exodus story. Haggadah means “telling” and along with being a physical text, the word captures the practice of telling and retelling a story to find deeper meaning.

The Christian form of Lectio Divina was first introduced by St. Gregory of Nyssa (c 330- 395), and also encouraged by St. Benedict of Nursia (c 480-547), the founder of the Benedictine order. It’s a way of developing a closer relationship with God by reflecting prayerfully on God’s word in scripture. In Lectio Divina, the chosen spiritual text is read four times in total, giving an opportunity to think deeply about it and respond thoughtfully. When we practice Lectio Divina, we sometimes can imagine we’re actually involved in the events of Scripture.

Here’s how to get started:

### *Prepare*

Light a candle and/or pray a prayer of invitation, saying something like, “God, let me/us hear from you,” and spend a few minutes sitting quietly so one’s mind is open to hearing from God.

### *Lectio (Read)*

The first reading is an opportunity to get to know the Scripture passage. Listen carefully for any words or phrases that seem to jump out. Write down or share those words if you are doing this with someone. No need for lots of explanation, just share what caught your attention.

### *Meditatio (Reflect)*

On the second reading of the same passage, listen for the deeper meaning God has infused in this scripture particularly for you in your life today. How does it make you feel? If there’s no immediate response, ask God to be more present with you.

### *Oratio (Respond)*

After a third reading, what action could you take based on this message from God, that would keep up the conversation with God and deepen your connections to the Spirit.

### *Contemplatio (Rest)*

After the final reading, spend around 5 minutes in silent contemplation. This doesn’t need to be a time of prayer or deep thought — just sit quietly and allow God to work. When the mind starts to wander and dart here and there, bring it gently back to stillness again.

## **Spiritual Examen**

A spiritual practice derived from St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish Basque Catholic priest and theologian, who gave up a life of nobility and co-founded the religious order called the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in the 16th century. The examen was developed in the 1500s as a core practice and is used to this day by Jesuits and other religious groups.

Find a quiet, comfortable place to spend about 10 minutes at the end of each day this week:

1. Give thanks for all God's gifts and benefits
2. Ask for light/God's presence
3. Review the day: thoughts, words, deeds, desires, consolations, desolations
4. Express gratitude, sorrow or purpose of amendment
5. Ask for the graces you desire for tomorrow

You can make it as long or short as you want. Try repeating the practice throughout the week.

## **Practicing Gratitude**

Another practice is to name and write down three *specific* things each day for which you are thankful. It could be anything: time with a loved one, a delicious meal, an unexpected break in your day, a kind exchange with a stranger, something in nature.

The point is to make it specific, and spend some time in your mind reliving the experience, savoring the feelings and thoughts they brought up in you.

This is a core practice that neuroscientists suggest in helping change some of our brain patterns from our predetermined negative, anxious bias to a cultivated, more positive, hopeful outlook.

## **Prayer Partners**

We welcome EVERYONE at United Parish to try having a prayer partner in Lent.

You may think that you are not that spiritual, or that you don't know how to pray, or even if you do, you don't want to share that with someone else, that it's private. That's OK. Just give it a try.

It's a holy experiment, basically committing to having a spiritual buddy in the congregation with whom you talk for 5-15 minutes each week from now through Easter (April 12).

You can sign up at [unitedparishbrookline.org/prayer-partners-during-lent](http://unitedparishbrookline.org/prayer-partners-during-lent)

## **An online "data-driven" daily discernment practice**

Methodist colleagues at the Harvard-Epworth Church in Cambridge have created a daily discernment opportunity, in which they email you a question each day to answer as part of your own private discernment practice. You can check it out and sign up at [4oform.org/signup](http://4oform.org/signup)

## **Scripture for your week ahead**

Ponder this verse from the Epistles (James 1:5) *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

Take a few minutes to read and reread it during the week, paying attention to how it lands with you at different times and in different situations. Are you able to trust God to provide wisdom when you ask for it? How is God calling you to listen and be receptive to divine wisdom?

Throughout your week, you may also want to re-read the verses from Psalm 42, that we chanted in worship today.

For more information, check out [unitedparishbrookline.org/news/opportunities-during-lent](http://unitedparishbrookline.org/news/opportunities-during-lent).