

Singing into the Darkness**Sunday, February 7, 2021 || 5th Sunday After Epiphany || Pastor Christy Wright***We invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM and join us in prayer ONLINE or over the PHONE**Audio worship, including music, prayers, and the sermon is available at**<https://georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services>***Audio worship is also available at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Just dial in, enter the access code on your keypad, and you will hear the service begin with music.****Prelude***At the Cross**Melissa & Brianna Quilitzsch***Announcements****Opening Hymn - In the Garden, UMH 314***1. I come to the garden alone**While the dew is still on the roses,**And the voice I hear fling on my ear,**The Son of God discloses.**2. He speaks, and the sound of his voice**Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,**And the melody that he gave to me**Within my heart is ringing**3. I'd stay in the garden with him**Though the night around me be falling**But he bids me go; thru the voice of woe**His voice to me is calling***Refrain***And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own;**And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.***First Scripture Reading***Isaiah 40:21-31*

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is God who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? God who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because God is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God does not faint or grow weary; God's understanding is unsearchable. God gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Song of Reflection*Be Thou My Vision**Melissa Quilitzsch***Moment of Contemplation - Shelter in Place by Kim Stafford**

Long before the pandemic, the trees knew how to guard one place with roots and shade. Moss found how to hug a stone for life. Every stream works out how to move in place, staying home even as it flows generously outward, sending bounty far. Now is our time to practice - singing from balconies, sending words of comfort from any courier, kindling our lonesome generosity to shine in all directions like stars.

In Our Prayers. Thanksgiving for: the gifts that make ministry possible, medical professionals and researchers. Holding in our hearts: our nation for peace, those experiencing unemployment, those facing racial injustice and violence and cannot breathe under the weight of oppression, for our congregation as we grieve the loss of loved ones, those experiencing illness or health issues - especially those who are ill with Covid-19 including George, Dave and Karen M. and family, and (for Al (and family as they care for him), Dan D. (Vicki's husband), Kelly R., Lindsey S.), those in nursing homes or extended care facilities (Betty, Claire, Priscilla), those caring for others (Carrie G., Crystal, Rachel), the United Methodist Church. *Note that this list will renew each month.*

Song of Reflection*As the Deer**Melissa Quilitzsch***Second Scripture Reading***Psalms 147:1-11, 20c*

Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for God is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; God gathers the outcasts of Israel. God heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds. God determines the number of the stars; God gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; God's understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the downtrodden; God casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre. God covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills. God gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry. God's delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor God's pleasure in the speed of a runner; but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear God, in those who hope in God's steadfast love. Praise the Lord!

Closing Hymn - Have Thine Own Way Lord, UMH 382*Refrain**Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!*

*1. Thou art the potter; I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will;
While I am waiting, yielded and still.*

*3. Wounded and weary, help me I pray
Power, all power, surely is thine
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine*

*2. Search me and try me, Savior today
Wash me just now, Lord, wash me just now,
As in thy presence humbly I bow.*

*4. Hold o'er my being absolute sway
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me*

Benediction

And now, may the peace of the Lord Christ go with you wherever God may send you; may God guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm; may God bring you home rejoicing at the wonders God has shown you; may God bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.¹

Postlude*Be Still My Soul**Melissa Quilitzsch***Community Announcements**

- **Covid-19 Vaccines.** Massachusetts residents aged 75+ are now eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine! Please visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine> to sign up. Vaccine sign up is also available through Big Y in Spencer. If you do not have internet access or need help signing up, please call Pastor Christy, and she can walk you through the process. At least four of our members have already gotten appointments! And there's a second option: the West Brookfield Health Board is partnering to put together a regional vaccine clinic in Palmer, though it is unclear when it will take place. You can call the WB Senior Center for more information at (508) 867-1407 and to leave your name and proof of eligibility.
- **Vacation.** Pastor Christy will be away from February 3-8 as she prepares for and participates in commissioning exams, the next step in the ordination process. If a need for pastoral care arises, Rev. Amie McCarthy of the Spencer UCC will be available. She can be reached at (508) 272-6437.
- **Meetings.** Due to a shift in schedules, SPRC will meet on Wednesday, February 10th at 7 PM by conference call at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Ad Council will meet the following week on Wednesday, February 17th at 10 AM by conference call, using the same number above.
- **Pastor Christy's Office Hours: FEBRUARY AND MARCH.** Pastor Christy will be away from February 3-8. When she returns, her office hours will shift to **Mondays** and **Wednesdays** from 8 AM to 4 PM and **Thursdays** from 8 AM to 12 noon. If you have an emergency outside of office hours, please call her cell phone, leave a message, and she will get back to you as soon as possible.

¹ Book of Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals

- **Ash Wednesday.** Due to concerns about Covid-19, our Ash Wednesday service will be fully remote, accessible at 7 PM on Wednesday, February 17th. This service will be available on our website at georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services, on our Facebook page, and over the phone at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Be on the lookout for a special Ash Wednesday mailing so we can all participate together, even if from a distance.
- **Reopening Advisory Board Update.** Due to the continuing rise in cases of Covid-19, the building remains closed until further notice, and worship will continue to take place online or over the phone. The Board has decided to suspend Reopening meetings until the situation changes (or until the state loosens up on restrictions). Please reach out to any member of the Trustees or Reopening Advisory Board if you have any questions or would like more information about how we can make in-person worship a possibility.
- **Giving Envelopes. Update:** Giving Envelopes for 2021 had been shipped in early 2020 to the parsonage and placed in storage - and subsequently forgotten about by Pastor Christy - oops! So we **will** be using Giving Envelopes for 2021. They will be distributed in the next couple of weeks.
- **NEW Financial Secretaries. THANK YOU** to Gail for your tremendous commitment and dedication as our Financial Secretary over the past several years! We are so grateful to Betty Sue and Heidi for your giving spirits as our new Financial Secretaries, which began last week. As we transition leadership, **please mail your offerings directly to the church** at PO Box 576, West Brookfield, MA 01585. Thank you!
- **Do you have an email address?** At this time, we are spending \$12.65 per week on postage to mail out services, which equals over \$50 a month. If you are able to receive mailings through email, we ask that you contact Pastor Christy with your email address so we can save money on postage. It is very much appreciated!
- **Heifer Project.** Once we have a count of how much we raised, we'll include a list of animals/projects we could support, and we'll make decisions in January. Thank you for your support!
- **Is Your Contact Information Up To Date?** Please let Jane Dolan know if your contact information has changed. In case of church cancellation or other circumstances, we would love to be able to get ahold of you.
- **Offerings** are still being encouraged during this time. Please consider mailing your offering to our church PO Box, so that we are able to continue in ministry through Christ for the transformation of the world. Offerings can be mailed to: George Whitefield United Methodist Church, PO Box 576, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

Sonshine Phone Calls and Cards List

If you know of anyone who could be added to our Sonshine list, let Pastor Christy know.

Betty Hubbard

47 E Main St.

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Priscilla Toppin

47 E Main St.

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Kelly Rice

98 Lake Shore Drive

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Claire Wirf

(508) 791-8131

(mornings)

383 Mill Street

Worcester, MA 01602

Daily Devotionals:

A Community Of Prayer from Around the Connection

The Upper Room Daily Devotionals official magazines are still being distributed.

If you would like a copy, please let Pastor Christy know.

Monday, February 8th through Saturday, February 13th || Written by Various Authors in the Conference

We invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM daily, meditate on our given scripture, and join us in prayer

Monday, February 8th, 2021

Alyssa M. Densham, Director of Family Ministries for The Kingstowne Communion

Read Mark 1:35-39

“Everyone is searching for you.” O, Holy God, I have searched for you in the pages of a book, thin pseudo-vellum sticking together, making it hard to find the next verse. I have searched for you in the words of a preacher on Sunday morning, with colorful light dancing across the bulletin I hold in my hands. I have searched for you in doorways and arches and stones stacked by hands long since fallen still. I have searched for you in the sound of an organ so loud that its sound resonated in my bones, voices lifted in song proclaiming “Hallelujah.” I have searched for you, God. We have searched for you, God. We have searched in all of the usual places. We have searched in all of the places we expect to find you. We have searched for you in all of the ways we expect to find you. We have searched for you in worship services livestreamed on Facebook and cast to our phones or our living room TV. We have searched for you in the crackle of the radio at drive-in

services held in parking lots where we cannot roll down our windows or see the pastor from our spot in the back row. We have searched for you in zoom meetings of our small groups and in socially distanced fellowship events with faces obscured by masks and always the fear of not knowing exactly what six feet actually looks like. We have searched for you, God. And when we don't find you, we decide that it's because you're simply not there. You are not in our google searches for "positivity rates" or "excess death calculations." You are not in the temper tantrums of five-year-olds and fifty-five-year-olds who have decided that they have just had it with online school today. You are not in the moments where the PA feels overwhelmed by all of the death he has experienced in ten short months that feel like an eternity. We feel like you are not there. Like you have forgotten us. Like you do not know who we are. You, God. You who spread the heavens like a tent for us to live in. You, God. You who number the stars and call them by name. You, God. You who knew us before we knew ourselves. We are searching for you, God. But in our search, we have limited who you are and how you are. We have forgotten that it is your Spirit that dwells within us and cannot be separate from us. We do not have to search for you, God, because you are here. Right here. Always here. With us. Heal our broken hearts, God. Bind up our wounds. Expand our understanding of all the ways that you are — That you always are — So that we might stop searching for you and find our rest in the knowledge that you are the Eternal God of Presence. Amen.

Tuesday, February 9th, 2021

**Lori Salisbury McKinley, Commonwealth West District Administrative Assistant
Read Psalm 111:1-10**

Hallelujah! Gathered, Beloved of Yahweh, here we are in your holy presence. I can't help but talk about how good you are and how good you have been. From birth, you breathed into me the breath of life. As I grew from a stumbling toddler to a child with skinned knees, you welcomed me into the congregation through the waters of baptism. As a young adult, God, even as life got hard, and wilderness seemed to overwhelm, you waited patiently for me to return. Upon returning to your loving arms, how awesome, how awe-struck, I was to know the meaning and power of your never failing grace! How grateful I am to know that you have invited me to be in worshipful, praise-filled service to you and to all God's people.
Hallelujah!

Wednesday, February 10th, 2021

**Allyson Printz, Commonwealth East District Administrative Assistant
Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

God -

More than ever, we strain to hear your message: *Love builds up.*

More than ever, we struggle to understand your message: *Love builds up.*

More than ever, we strive to live out your message: *Love builds up.*

Thank you for your love - our guiding light.

Amen.

Thursday, February 11th, 2021

**Rev. Karen Skalla, Provisional Deacon, White River Junction UMC; Green Mountain District
Read Psalm 119:105-112**

Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a Light on my Path. We have promised you again and again that we will walk your path of light, listening for your Voice to help us know right from wrong. We have suffered so much Lord, over the past eleven months and we pray for your unending promise of protection and safety. We thank you for this, with open hearts yearning to be filled with the Light of your Word- your Laws- and not our own. We forget Lord and try to take our lives in our own hands, but we know that our lives our Yours, and we willingly hand them over to you, so that you will keep them on Your path of Light. You have sent us your son, to forever put the joy of Your love in our hearts, as we walk your Path. My heart is set on keeping your decrees, to the very end, as I walk your Path. The light of day is fading as we approach the winter months. By following God's Light, we move in the right direction even though we can't always see the next steps. May we walk in the Light to have right relationships with others. May we keep our promise to God to use His Spirit in Jesus- the headlamp he provides to us- to guide us in times of darkness. If we walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another and with all of Creation in the way that God intends. May we stride forward with confidence knowing this and knowing that God's Light in us illuminates the path - to show us the way. Amen.

Friday, February 12th, 2021**Pastor Robin Sprague, Pastor Penobscot UMC and Brooksville UMC****Read Matthew 18: 21-35**

Gracious Mystery, Holy One— Your Love forgives and forgives and forgives again Before the smudged, dirty face of Our own Unforgiveness. We want to blame--- to cast off our burden onto another being, like our worst selves might yell or kick at the shaggy dog or wobbly toddler, the least among the lowly of our cramped kingdoms, when nobody is looking. Hurt the smallest. And yet you call to us. Come, you say, put aside all that. You yourself have been forgiven much. Help us to feel the strong shoulder of Your Goodness beneath the weight of our bowed and shamed heads, the hot flame of our angry cheeks as we remember how we have judged others. Lord Jesus: calm us, cool us, set us free. Amen.

Saturday, February 13th, 2021**Robin Genetti, Lay Leader at Waterville Union Church; Green Mountain District****Read Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16 and Exodus 17:1-7**

Precious Savior, Daily you grace us with miracles, blessings and healings both great and small. We are always being cared for by You like a child with a loving parent. Why is it that on our journey called life we often forget that we are not in control? We forget to reach out to you in all things. Our pride often gets in the way when we think we alone have accomplished great things. Since ancient times you have seen us through trial, suffering and want. Today is no different. This is not the world's first pandemic. This is not the first time we have seen sickness in great numbers. This is not the first time oppressed and marginalized people have struggled. We need to turn to the lessons of old. Your teachings have not changed. We have. It is time for us to incline our ear and hear the words from Your mouth. We need to replace worry with prayer. With You ALL things are possible. We are never alone. Amen!