

Mason Congregational Church June 2018

Please visit: www.masoncongregationalchurch.org or call us 878-1684

Blues and Jazz: Lament and Improvisation by Richard Rohr

May 24, 2018

Today's meditation is drawn from Barbara Holmes' book Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church. She explores the blues—a musical form developed in the Deep South by African Americans in the late 19th century—and jazz—originating in New Orleans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—as authentic expressions of life. In addition to reading her words, I invite you to listen (and perhaps dance?) to B. B. King or Miles Davis as a contemplative practice. [1]

Like the familiar laments in Psalms, blues artists forthrightly engaged the issues in life that the church would not discuss—such as sexuality, theodicy, and the unabated despair of the people. The lyrics were straightforward and sometimes raunchy, but they captured the life experiences of the listeners. While gospel music promised peace in the hereafter and the promise of God's presence, the blues became public theology, communal inquiry, and a critique of the church. . . .

The contemplative moment comes as the cause of the blues is considered within the broader context of God's inexplicable absence or startling intervention. Under every stanza is the silent and unspoken question, "How long, oh Lord, how long will your people continue to suffer?" . . .

No one thinks for one moment that when B. B. King sang, he was saying all that there was to be said about the subject. . . . One or two lines hold the portal open for listeners to mentally supply the rest. This is the contemplative turn. . . . Smoky nightclubs and juke joints become the spaces for contemplation that attends to the details of daily life and the potential for its enrichment and ultimate fulfillment. . . .

Jazz is a way of being in the world, a willingness to break away from rhetorical comfort zones and language hierarchies. When you know that you are "between a rock and a hard place," then you must respond creatively to the situation. Jazz is the musical version of the communal response to displacement. This is not a black thing; the majority of Americans today are displaced in one way or another. However, the displacement of the African diaspora was sealed by skin color as a permanent social exile. Some amelioration of that exile has only now begun, but only because of the genius of the community for creativity and improvisation upon the main themes of oppression and marginalization.

The improvisational motif in jazz music refers to the spontaneous creation of melodic innovations that diverge and meld with the main tune. . . . When the contributions of the individual improvisations soar, the contemplative potential increases. For in the midst of unthinkable rhythmic and tonal combinations, we also hear the impossible being brought within our reach. When Miles Davis blows the cacophony that can barely be contained by the word *song*, we come closest to the unimaginable, the potential of the future, and the source of our being.

Gateway to Presence: *If you want to go deeper with today's meditation, take note of what word or phrase stands out to you. Come back to that word or phrase throughout the day, being present to its impact and invitation. [1]* Note that a "contemplative practice" can be anything we do with the intention of opening our hearts, minds, and bodies to God's presence, to Love. Contemplation is the graced experience of union with Love, which is always a gift, never earned or achieved. We practice to be open to receive such a gift. Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, second edition (Fortress Press: 2017), 186-188.

Upcoming Events

Aug 24 Celebration in Mason of 250th Anniversary of founding charter

On August 24, 1768, a town father named Obadiah Parker returned from Portsmouth with a Town Charter from Governor Wentworth that officially established the Town of Mason, NH! That was 250 years ago, so this year we are celebrating the town's 250th birthday. While some events have been occurring throughout the year, the main celebration is on **Saturday, August 25, 2018**.

The celebration will kick off with fireworks on **Friday night, August 24**, at dusk. Viewing will be from the big hill on Greenville Rd, the one with the view of Boston on a clear day. The fireworks display will be designed by Atlas Fireworks and will be set off from the town sand pit, which is surprisingly close by as the crow (or rocket) flies.

Saturday, August 25, is the main event, kicked off by a road race at 9 am at the ball field and a pancake breakfast from 8 - 10 am at the church. At 10 am, Obadiah himself (almost) will reenact the presentation of the town charter, and before you know it, there will be word of battles with British troops. Mason will be ready! An encampment of the 6th Middlesex Regiment will be right behind the Mann Store, and it will be called to arms! At this point, the American flag will be raised, and Mason's veterans will be honored at the Pleasant View Cemetery down the road by our own Nancy Richards, a veteran of WWII.

Events after that include an outstanding group of artisans who will be demonstrating crafts: basket weaving, a blacksmith, a cooper, fly tying, honey making, pottery, soap making, wool spinning, stone wall building, weaving and even a maker of wooden spoons! Uncle Sam will roam about, as will Little Red Riding Hood. The Wolf Rock minister will try to find his way home, telling his tale of pursuit by howling wolves. There will be children's games from the past, a petting farm and pony rides.

The church will be hosting events on Saturday and Sunday morning. On Saturday, you can enjoy a Pancake Breakfast between 8 - 10 am in Fellowship Hall. At 1 pm, you'll hear stories and songs telling of Mason's church history, in the church sanctuary. The church has some historical artifacts from decades and centuries past that will be on display. Also at 1 pm, there will be a Tea Room in the church narthex, the front part of the church with the two doors. Come and settle in for light refreshment and tales of yesteryear. Then, on Sunday morning, come to old time church service at 10 am. Do you know who the Tithingman is? Come find out, you'll get a tickle.

Church events: Saturday, August 25.

- 8 - 10 am - Pancake breakfast and **no** yard sale this year!
- 1 pm - Church history stories and songs, and a display of historical artifacts
- 1 pm - Tea room

Church events: Sunday, August 26 Note: NO yard sale this year

- 10 am - Old Tyme Church Service

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- **Mission: Nashua Soup Kitchen, June 9th at 3:15 meet at Church.** Join in this effort to share our caring for neighbors who need a smile, and the Soup Kitchen staff that needs extra hands. Meet in the parking lot of the church at 3:15 pm for carpooling. This is a mission open to all. Invite a friend or neighbor, and you may open an opportunity for another caring person. Call 878-4993 or email Kathy at chapman.kathy@gmail.com.
- **Mason Volunteer Fire Company Sponsors the Community Supper June 14th 5:30 to 7pm** Your volunteer fire company brings you this special cookout of burgers, and hot dogs, with all the trimmings, and a fresh salad. Bring a friend, or reach out to a new neighbor, and support your neighbors who volunteer for YOU! Fire, emergency calls, EMTs---they do it all.
- **CVTC Community Volunteer Transportation Company** If you know someone in Mason who needs a ride, to doctor appointments and more, call (877) 428-2882 Meanwhile if you would like to be a **volunteer driver**, call 1-877-428-2882 ext 5 for information on mileage reimbursement, insurance, and more. You can be a driver once or twice a week, or once a month, you decide on what your schedule allows! Call for more info. For rides contact on line: <https://www.nh.gov/dot/programs/rideshare/index.htm>.
- **Conversations with Women “on hold” until September.** Resuming in the fall, we will begin by sharing a book Active Hope by Joann Macy and Chris Johnstone. Request it on Library Loan, or purchase a copy at Toadstool. (Can you really imagine that anyone’s conversation can be on hold??) If you want to know who Joanna Macy is go to: <https://onbeing.org/programs/joanna-macy-a-wild-love-for-the-world/> This is the site for the podcast, or transcript. You won’t be disappointed!
- **Bystander CPR** In April we had 11 people sign up for Bystander CPR, and they also received the critical instructions on how to use an AED (automated external defibrillator) Simple instructions, and practice in a 2 hour class. If you are interested, we will be glad to host another class. Please contact Kathy Chapman, chapman.kathy@gmail.com
- **NEW “Bystander First Aid”** Our instructor for the Bystander CPR has agreed to teach a “more than bandaids” first aid class if there is interest. What can you do to stop bleeding? Stabilize a person til the ambulance gets there, and more. If you have an interest in this class, contact Kathy Chapman Chapman.kathy@gmail.com for more information
- **Living Room Coffee House June 16th 6:30 to 9 or so. Come celebrate with Steve Tamulonis and Mike Damery for their tenure as Live Music Hosts in Mason! This is the last coffee house they will be hosting.** Doors open at 6:30, there is a signup for open mic, and snacks are available. This month’s featured performers are: Mason’s very own acoustic Duo. Jess and Dean have been performing, professionally, local, for years, and are a favorite at the Mason Old Homes day. Jess has a rich soulful voice with a hint of Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss, and Etta James. She is accompanied by Mr Dean on guitar, banjo and vocals. They will entertain you with current contemporary songs that we all love to sing along with. They love to have a good time!

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- **Lending Library Books and Music, a Blessing.** Notice the fine bookshelf in Fellowship Hall that has books for lending—all nicely organized, and alphabetized by a church angel. Steve Tamulonis has contributed some CDs for lending/listening. Please sign them out, and return in a reasonable time. Enjoy this mission/blessing.
- **Prayer shawls always needed, free yarn available.** Spend some time by joining the knitters of Mason Church in prayerful knitting. Let us know if you need yarn or pattern. If you know of someone who needs the warmth and prayers of a shawl please contact: Susan Suokko at Usercat2@comcast.net or 941-920-0270 or Michelle Scott 878-1680

Attention knitters: Go to <http://twillnh.com/calendar-4/> and check out Sandy's website, and the schedule for activities there. It may be one of our Conversations with Women outings!



Are you listening, caring, sharing?

- ♥ **Wally and Gretchen Brown** Gretchen fell and broke her hip. Gretchen came home 5/30/2018. Call Wally (878-1481) if you want an update on how she's doing, or better yet, stop by and see Gretchen. This is a time when she needs her friends more than ever!
- ♥ **Jen Schongar** Our neighbor and friend, Jen was recently diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Her husband, Bill and the children are stepping up to cover for the many things mothers do. If you want to help out with a meal or with barn care, sign up at <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/00n0y9>. We will raise them in prayer and into the light, in this challenging time. She started chemo on 4/30/2018. You can send cards to **923 Wilton Rd, Mason**. In this day of email, so many of us enjoy the real mail in the mailbox, especially when our days need that real connection. Jen is collecting meaningful quotes and poems. Do you have one?
- ♥ **Amber and Marcus and toddler Luke welcomed baby Noah to Mason on April 18th.** He was over 8 pounds, and is doing well. Parents are happy and probably tired, but everyone appears to be adjusting well.
- ♥ **David Ahern died unexpectedly on April 16, 2018.** He is remembered as a long time active member of our community. He was always so very helpful to his wife Peggy who suffered a stroke some years ago. Please send condolences to : Margaret Ahern (Peg/Peggy) at 61 Townsend Rd, Mason, NH
- ♥ **Laila Washburn** Laila lives at Summer Hill Assisted Living in Peterborough. She loves company, and cards. At 99, everyday is treasured. She just had a birthday, and it is not too late to send birthday wishes. Laila Washburn, Summer Hill, 183 Old Dublin Rd, Peterborough, NH 03458. Call ahead if you have questions. 924-6238
- ♥ **Curt Dunn** and his attentive Karin, enjoy company, and occasional assistance, but check with them first. 878-2675 or eisenhau@aol.com Karin's sister, Judy, is surprising all with her strength but is still fragile so keep her in prayer.
- ♥ **Do you have new neighbors?** We have baskets we can put together with some special items made in Mason, and some info on Town activities and church info. Let me know: Michelle 878-1680 or miscott39@gmail.com
- ♥ If you have news, questions, or corrections to the newsletter, please contact Michelle 878-1680 or miscott39@gmail.com