

LEURA UNITING CHURCH SUNDAY 3RD MAY 2020 - FOURTH IN EASTER ORDER OF SERVICE (prepared by Mark Hillis)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is risen

He is risen indeed!

Hope is alive

Love has overcome!

The joy of Christ shall be with us

Hallelujah! AMEN.

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Hymn 383 *Joyful the morning* [Words of the hymn appear at the end of this document]

PRAYER OF ADORATION, CONFESSION & THANKSGIVING

We give thanks to you, gracious God, for the life and ministry of Jesus. We praise you that his suffering and death is overcome by your everlasting love for all creation. As children of your universe free us from all evil and turn our hearts with compassion towards all life. Once we thought that life was about self-preservation; but now we have learned to trust in you. Once we saw others as threatening; but now we see sisters and brothers, loved by you. Where once we cried for vengeance against all enemies; now we see your mercy and your gift of peace.

Conclude the prayer with verses from Psalm 23 [New Revised Standard Version]

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

my whole life long.

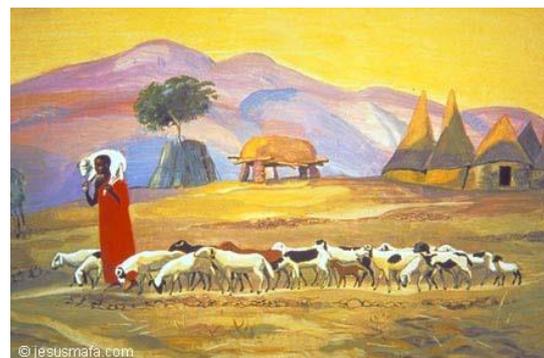
—Silent meditation—

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

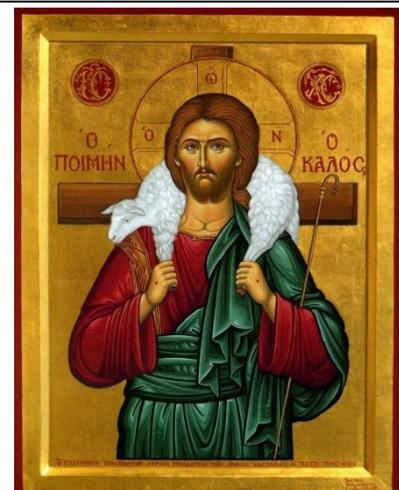
You are a child of God: Forgiven,

receive the gift of new life

from the very breath of Jesus Christ,



Good Shepherd, Mafa Art, North Camaroon



Icon in the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, Cambridge

the great shepherd of the sheep.

***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, AMEN.***

Hymn 464 *Seek, O seek the Lord* [Words of the hymn appear at the end of this document]

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2: 42--47

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

John 10: 1—18 *(this is a deliberately extended reading)*

In this is the Gospel of the Lord:
Praise to Jesus Christ, the Word!

Jesus the Good
Shepherd
painting in the
Roman
Catacombs, 3rd
Century.



SHARING THE WORD

What's all this about shepherds? Psalm 23 and John 10: 1—18

Strictly speaking, it's not just about "shepherds," in the sense of folk who wander around communities in the Middle East leading flocks of sheep. The image is transferable to other parts of the world and to other communities, not because of the sheep or the way they graze, but because of the depiction of caring people taking responsibility for those in their care. A good shepherd will make sheep the priority; a good parent will do so for the children; a good foreman for the workers; a good welfare worker for their clients; a good CEO for the employees; a good probation officer for the ex-prisoners ... you get the idea. The shepherd and sheep theme has filled to overflowing our understanding of what the Church has always called pastoral care.

Imitating the parables and stories of God and the shepherd kings in Jewish faith, the Christian Church has long taught about Jesus in this pastoral way. We acknowledge him as the Good Shepherd, in stark contrast with power elites who forget their chief priorities.¹

Christian communities make a mistake when they invest one person or one office with the designation, 'Shepherd.' A better way to think of the metaphor of the shepherd is to see Christ as the one Good Shepherd, who guides all the faithful to fulfil their tasks of leadership, nurture and care. It is not just a matter of caring. There is also a risk-taking dimension, as the people of God are encouraged to recognise that the Lord is their shepherd, their security and their peace. They need no other. They are then free to take risks themselves, not fearing anyone or anything, but living-out their vocation in faith, hope and love.

RESPONSES TO SHARING THE WORD:

I invite you to choose one thing to do from each of the three headings below. You may do it by yourself; OR Share what you've done with someone else anytime you like; OR bring your responses to the ZOOM meeting with Paul Cameron at 10.00am today, if you have a computer and are online.

BIBLICAL CULTURE AND IMAGERY

- Do you really have to know stuff about sheep and shepherds before you can understand Psalm 23 or John 10? If so, why? If not, why not?
- "The Lord is my shepherd ..." Psalm 23. How might you write a psalm like this one. Try writing "The Lord is my ..." What comes to mind?

¹ See what the Prophet Ezekiel has to say about the Shepherd Kings of Israel – Ezekiel Chapter 34!

- In John’s Gospel we are given many images of Jesus through the “I am . . .” sayings:
 - “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48; see also John 6:41, 51);
 - “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; John 9:5);
 - “I am the door/gate” (John 10:7, 9);
 - “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14);
 - “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25);
 - “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6);
 - “I am the true vine” (John 15:1; see also John 15:5).

Which of the above sayings about Jesus appeal to you? John’s is the only Gospel of the four with these specific sayings. If you were writing a gospel, what images might you use for Jesus?

AUSTRALIAN CULTURE AND IMAGERY

- Around the time of Anzac Day you may hear politicians and others say, “They died for the freedoms we enjoy today.” What is your response to that kind of approach? In what ways do you think that the teaching about Jesus laying down his life for his sheep is different from the Anzac tradition?
- As one special day recedes (Anzac Day), another is approaching (Mothers’ Day). In what ways may mothers be “good shepherds.”

ACTIONS

- Look at iconic images of Jesus the Good Shepherd and meditate upon them. *Try drawing an image of Jesus that makes sense for you.*
- Prepare a picture, a brief movie, or a puzzle for someone else to enjoy.
- Making the world a better place. *Our own examples of ‘good shepherds’? What pastorally caring actions might you take this week?*

Hymn 659 *The Lord is my shepherd* [Words of the hymn appear at the end of this document]

CHURCH NOTICES. Do be sure to check our latest church bulletin.

OFFERING & DEDICATION PRAYER. Whether it is our gifts of time and loving actions or simply our presence, we have an offering to make. If you wish to sustain a monetary offering, follow the guidelines in the church bulletin.

We make our offerings of our time and our love with joy and thankfulness to God, Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Kate Prowse)

Invitation to Pray²

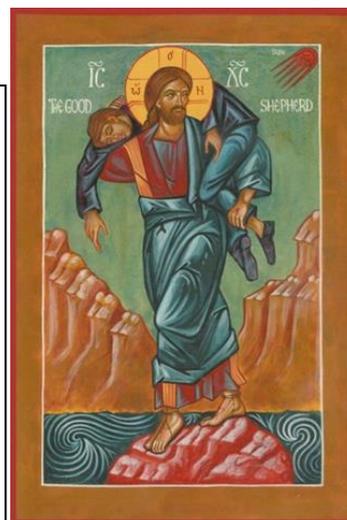
*Let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.*

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd of your people.
Hear the cry of your flock as we pray,
“Good Shepherd, **Receive our prayer.**”

Good Shepherd, you call us to follow where you lead.
Give us ears to hear and know your voice.

And give us the courage and strength to lay down our lives for one another,
as even you laid down your life for us.

A version of
an icon of the
Good
Shepherd by
Father
Vladimir.
*What is
distinctive
about this
icon?*



² With acknowledgement of the words of Fr. Jeremiah Williamson

We bring before you with gratitude the health workers, the supermarket workers, the garbage collectors, the educators, the emergency service workers and our governing leaders. Those who today carry nations forward through an unprecedented global crisis. May their hands reflect your gentle care for the weak and vulnerable.

Good Shepherd,
Receive our prayer.

Good Shepherd,
gather to yourself the people of the world so there will be one flock under your reign.
Forgive us for our hatred and divisions.

We bring to you those orphaned, crippled or dispossessed by war; for refugees wandering this earth in search of a home, for all victims of strife and warfare, and for all those who have dedicated their lives for the search for peace and reconciliation. This work continues alongside a pandemic which will only see the need increase for the already marginalised and weak.

Good Shepherd, within your embrace we find justice. We bring to you the brave voices who cry out for freedom, those prepared to stand up and be heard without counting the personal cost.

Good Shepherd,
Receive our prayer.

Good Shepherd, you have blessed us with green pastures and still waters—
places in your world where we find rest and renewal.
We see the natural world thriving in the absence of human destruction.
We thank you for the beauty of the earth.

Good Shepherd,
Receive our prayer.

Good Shepherd,
even when wolves attack, you never leave your loved ones; even in the valley of the shadow of death, you are present.

Be with the families who have lost loved ones to coronavirus and to other illness which may seem overshadowed. The pain and sadness is still very real. Walk beside those who grieve and cannot mourn with more than a few people at this time.

Comfort the families of the police officers killed in Victoria and all victims of violence.

May loving hands take the lead from The Shepherd to rescue those trapped in silence behind doors where violence dominates and comfort them in their distress.

Good Shepherd,
Receive our prayer.

Good Shepherd,
you love us so much that you call us each by name:
We pray for the healing of our brothers and sisters in your name.
--Time of Silence--

Good Shepherd,
Receive our prayer.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus – the Good Shepherd who taught us to say:

“Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.”
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever, **Amen.**

St. John's
Church
Ashfield,
Stained Glass



BENEDICTION

The grace of Christ attend you;
the love of God surround you;
the Holy Spirit keep you;
this day and for ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 383, *Together in Song*

1. Joyful the morning when Jesus Christ is risen!
Golden light is dawning, the day spring radiant shines,
all the hosts of heaven raise on high their psalms divine,

*O let us too be happy, rejoice and cry out 'Hallelujah!'
He is risen, and opens heav'n for all those who believe.*

2. Now earth awaking is raising shouts of praise,
'Jesus now is risen!' All creatures now rejoice
they are in the care again of their triumphant Lord.

Refrain

3. All peoples living in lands washed by the seas,
nations under all four directions of the wind,
can be joyful in the resurrection of the Lord.

Refrain

Traditional Torres Strait Islands hymn *tr.* David Thompson 1941–
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Hymn 464, *Together in Song*

*Seek, O seek the Lord, while he is near;
trust him, speak to him in prayer,
and he will hear.*

1. God be with us in our lives,
direct us in our calling;
break the snares the world contrives,
keep us from falling.
2. God, increase in us the life
that Christ by dying gave us:
though we faint in mortal strife
his blood will save us.
3. Strengthen in our hearts the love
we owe to one another;
how can we love God above
and not each other?



Good Shepherd, Ade Bethune

James Phillip McAuley 1917–76 alt.
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Hymn 659, *Together in Song*

1. The Lord is my shepherd, and I want to follow
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.
Over the mountains, the waters and by ways,
valleys and highways he's waiting for me.

*I want to go to meet him there,
to lay myself down in his love.
The Lord is my shepherd and I want to follow
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.*

2. And while on the journey to where we are going
he promised to be there to help us along,
and over the mountains we'll walk on together,
to know all the wonders he's given to me.

*I want to go to meet him there,
to lay myself down in his love.
The Lord is my shepherd and I want to follow
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.*

Brian Kerry Boniwell 1949– based on Psalm 23
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Clay Enoch's Bronze Sculpture of
The Good Shepherd