

worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 21st April 2024
The Fourth
Sunday of Easter
The Revd Adam Payne

Call to Worship

The Lord is our shepherd, the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep.
We will love one another, as Christ loves us.
Love, not merely in thought and word, but in truth and action.
Open your hearts to goodness and mercy today.
Come today and praise the God of love.
May God bless our service today. Amen.

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Good Shepherd,
help us to boldly proclaim your love,
lighting the way of your truth for all to see.
As we walk through green pastures,
beside still waters,
and even through the darkest valleys,
help us to go forth confidently.
For you are greater than our fears
and you know how to bring us peace.

As the world we live in seems to be a more fearful place every day,
help us to remember that you ARE with us.
Goodness and mercy may seem so elusive,
but we know that you have promised we will find
them in your house, if no where else.

Lord, we confess to you that there are times where we have
seen enemies in the faces of our neighbours...
the other....the refugee...the poor...and the oppressed...
As you have prepared out tables, Lord,
Help us to turn enemies into friends.
Help us to desire a longer table, where more can be welcomed in your name. Amen.

Reading

St John 10:11-18

All Age Activities

You may find some good activities here

<https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/faith-adventures-for-children-together/>

Don't forget the prayer prompts on the website:

<https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/children-youth-work/prayer-prompts-for-children/>

Sermon Notes

Today's Gospel lesson is in the midst of Jesus' "I am" statements. Identifying himself as "the Good Shepherd", Jesus is using language that would have been very familiar and comfortable to his pastoral audience. Even if they weren't shepherds themselves, it was a common part of the identity of rural Israel. While there are many lessons that can be drawn from these verses, I invite the preacher to consider verse 16: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (NIV). Traditionally, this verse has referred to Gentiles, those outside the Jewish community, but I don't think we have to stop the comparison there.

Human beings love to draw lines. We love to decide who is right, and who is wrong. Who is good, and who is bad. Who is "in" and who is "out". Maybe it's leftover tribal or evolutionary thinking: those that look or act like us are going to be "the most safe". However, that's not God's plan for humanity.

I invite churches to think about those that they have been excluding, either deliberately or unintentionally. Look around your community, and then look around your worship service. What groups exist in the neighbourhood...but not inside your church? Maybe it's people of other ethnicities. Maybe it's people of other sexualities. Maybe it's people of different income levels. How then can we reach those groups and let them know that they ARE welcome, even desired, within our place of worship.

Prayer of Intercession

God of the Resurrection, we thank you for the time that we have to worship and praise

together this day. We praise you for the continuing gift of Easter, for the Spring that brings longer days and beautiful flowers. We pray for that same new life and vitality within our churches, Lord, that we may be energised to do your work.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As you have been our shepherd, we pray for the shepherds within our own churches. Those that keep watch, guarding your flocks. Those willing to go out and search for sheep in need. Bless all those willing to tell others about You.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those walking daily on your path. On the days that the paths are straight, and the sun is shining, it's easy to follow you. On other days, when we're walking in a dark valley, it's more difficult. It's during those times when we need you the most.

We pray especially for the sick, the elderly and bereaved: that the Good Shepherd may give them courage and lead them beside the restful waters of healing and peace.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Bless us now as we join with that cloud of witnesses throughout the ages, as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us...Our Father...

Offering Prayer

Giving and loving God,
as the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep,
may we, too, strive to serve our neighbours.
Whether next door, across town, or around the world,
may God bless our prayers, our gifts, and our ministries.
In Christ's name, we present these gifts. Amen.

Benediction

May you show the love of God in all you do.
Following the Good Shepherd,
welcome others with kindness, love, and humility.
Bring comfort to all,
making friends and not enemies,
wherever you go.
And all of God's people said...Amen.

Hymn Suggestions

	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun	378	210		804
In Heavenly Love Abiding	590	551	736	331
Christ, Who Knows All His Sheep	470			
The Lord's My Shepherd (Townend)			481	1008
The Lord's My Shepherd I'll Not Want	679	14	480	660
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	552	462	479	649
In Christ There Is No East or West	647	624	685	329
I Will Sing The Wondrous Story			323	315
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy	353	187	416	683
You Lord Are Both Lamb and Shepherd		355		
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name		457	342	13

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*