

twelvebaskets



EASTER 4A

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Fourth Sunday of Easter - Year A
26th April 2026



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

20 STF – Be still for the presence of the Lord OR

42 STF – O sing to the Lord

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers OR

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom

Readings: Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Hymn:

352 STF – Jesus Christ is the Lord of all OR

302 STF – He has risen

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

594 STF – Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us OR

418 STF – We have a gospel to proclaim

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling OR

311 STF – The day of resurrection, earth, tell it out abroad!

Blessing

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Call to worship

Let us be still, just a moment.
Let us be still, and aware of the love within, and all around us.
Let us be still, and know that the Spirit of God is in our midst,
Prompting, inviting, comforting.
May we hear your voice this day, O Lord,
Amen.¹

Hymn:

20 STF – Be still for the presence of the Lord OR
42 STF – O sing to the Lord

Opening Prayers

Shepherd of our souls,
You call us back to You when we wander.
You know each of us by name even when we forget who we are,
Your love and faithfulness toward us endure and shows no bounds.
You know our hearts, all-loving God.
As the shepherd leads the flock together, they find safety in unity,
We pray that we as one people may also unite as one devoted community, not against one another,
We trust in You with our whole hearts and minds.
We thank You for the gift of one another.
When we walk through the darkest valleys, help us to endure the hardships,
Renewal is found with You guiding our lives.
Let no one walk alone.
In the trials of life, there may be voices that tempt us to sin and try to steal our hope.
Help us recognise Your voice above the noise of fear and doubt.
Give us the courage to keep going.
Restore what is weary,
filling our cups until they overflow.
Guide us through what is uncertain.
Let us live our lives in You, through You, reflecting Your image.
In You we find purpose and belonging.
In Your abundant love we trust and are renewed.
Draw us closer to You and to Your peace
as we commit to a righteous way of living.
Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Alice Arbon

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

In recent years we've seen the rise of the video doorbell – not only does it ring to alert the homeowner that someone is at the door, it uses the built in camera to show live video of what is happening outside: who is passing by, delivering parcels or when family and friends come to visit. All these events are seen through the eye of the camera which is constantly keeping a lookout. Do any of us here have a doorbell like this? (explore whether there are any interesting or amusing tales people have to tell about things which have happened.)

I wonder what a video doorbell would have noticed at the entrance to the sheepfold Jesus talks about in the gospel passage today? Jesus talks about thieves and bandits – would they have triggered a warning message to come through: "Motion has been detected at the gate!" Yet when the gatekeeper comes the voice recognition software would be reassured: it is not the voice of a stranger so all is well.

Jesus helps us to understand that although many other people may claim to be the one to follow, that they may arrive with clever ideas, trying to persuade us that they know the right way to go, none of them compare to him, the man who is the son of God. Following the words and ideas of the strangers leads to ruin and destruction, but following Jesus leads to life. We can trust Jesus because he is the good shepherd, the one who cares for the sheep in the flock – who cares for you and me.

How exciting it would be to one day hear the video doorbell alert "motion has been detected", only for us to look and see Jesus standing there! What would you want to say when you open the door and there he is on the doorstep, greeting you by name? That's something we can all ponder in the coming days...

Amen.³

Hymn:

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers OR

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom

Readings: Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Hymn:

352 STF – Jesus Christ is the Lord of all OR

302 STF – He has risen

³ All Age Talk written by Gail Adcock

Reflections on the readings

I don't know about you, but even the thought of spending some time with Psalm 23 makes me breath a little slower. It's a Psalm that is one of great hope and reassurance. Some scholars call it 'A Psalm of Confidence'. Maybe that is why it is one of the most familiar of the Psalms, said and sung in both private devotion and public worship. It doesn't skirt over the fact that we will face challenges and difficulties, but it is one which ends with a beautiful invitation to a feast where the host will welcome us with open arms.

This morning let's go on a journey together with this wonderful piece of scripture. The Psalm will be read throughout the reflection rather than as one piece of prose. So, I'd like to imagine that we are heading off into the hills, taking these words with us to inspire and encourage our steps.

[Alternative Ways of using the Reflection

If you are reading this on your own you may want to use sections as daily prayer prompts.

The sections would lend themselves to the creation of prayers stations for a cafe church or reflective evening service or adapted as part of a memorial or All Saints service.]

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Imagine that, a life which is grounded on the premise that God's goodness is enough to rely on. Of course, meeting the basic material needs – enough food, shelter, warmth for ourselves and to ensure this is a non-negotiable for others comes first. But sometimes we have made luxuries essentials, imagining that we couldn't manage without them. Do we ever treat ourselves after completing a hard task or getting through a challenge, instead of acknowledging God's presence and provision giving thanks to God for the way God has led and supported us through that time?

To put our trust in God, to rely on God, is to learn to prioritise that which is truly essential and live lives which allow others to access enough to live and thrive.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

God doesn't ask us to seek out rest when we can squeeze it in, or when we are so tired that our rest feels more like snatched recovery. God 'makes us' stop. It is as we take God's command for sabbath rest seriously that we can drink deeply of God's well of refreshment. Our soul rediscover their purpose, our sense of peace is aligned and the noise of the world slowly starts to ebb away allowing us to listen to God's voice. Take a moment now to imagine a place which restores your soul, it might be the open hills, beside a river, stream or beach, a city park, a corner of a garden. Imagine that Jesus is walking or sitting beside you, sharing this time, you may want to share something with him, or simply enjoy his company in the quiet.

He leads me in right paths, for his name's sake.

When I want to get to a new destination in the car, I simply type the postcode into the Waze app (other GPS systems are available) and it will work out for me the quickest and most direct route avoiding road closures, traffic jams and accidents. If only I was as quick to ask God to lead me in every aspect of my life and work. A wise colleague once shared that they prayed before pressing send on every email – a way of ensuring that they were caring for the person who would receive the message and an opportunity to write carefully and sensitively. When we desire to walk in God's way, to follow a path which will lead to abundant life we have to be ready to ask God to show us the way and then have the humility and obedience to follow. When you leave this service or finish reading this reflection, what is the next step for you? How might Jesus inspire your next conversation or task so that it may be full of life, grace and hope for yourself and others?

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.

We know that we make the decision to become followers of Jesus, the path that we will take includes uphill struggles, steep valleys, rocky and unstable stretches as well as flat, uncomplicated miles. The Psalmist offers words of reassurance that God refuses to leave us alone, even in the times when we feel abandoned, lost or frightened, his quiet presence is constant. Pain and loss are not eradicated but their experience is shared by the God who transformed even death into eternal life. The next time you are overwhelmed by a situation that seems insurmountable, whisper 'You are with me' and know you are not alone.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Today the gospel reading is the first section of John 10, in which Jesus describes himself as the gate of the sheepfold, promising life in all its fullness to those who choose to follow him. In these verses of Psalm 23, we read of God's lavish and extravagant care for God's people. Often a reflection of God's generosity and welcome is expressed by Christian communities as hospitality shown in a shared cup of coffee or a shared meal. Neil Johnston is the minister who leads 'Street Banquet' in Birmingham, one of the Methodist Churches 'New Places for New People' which offers care filled, lavish hospitality in the form of a shared meal for those who are street homeless. (If you have the means to project and share videos in your context there is a 5 min film to illustrate the project on their website - [Street Banquet](#)) But whether today you will eat or drink with others or alone in your own home, take a moment to say a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings that God has given you this day.

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.

As we come to the end of this walk through the Psalm we come to the final verses. The words 'shall follow me' seem a bit tame in the English translation, for they carry in the Hebrew the notion that God will doggedly and relentless pursue us. This can seem a bit intimidating but to my mind the Psalmist simply wants to convey the deepest desire of God to continually search us out. We return to the opening verse 'The Lord is my Shepherd' - and remember that Jesus took the title for himself. May Jesus, the good shepherd who has always your best interests at heart, who loves you with a love deeper than his own life, and who through his Spirit accompanies you in every moment, valley and mountain top of your life, bless your ongoing journeys and may your joy be to sing his praises forever more.

Amen.

Questions for reflection / discussion:

- Which verse of the Psalm has particularly resonated with you as you have heard/read it today?
- Have you experience of knowing the comfort and presence of God in difficult circumstances or dark valleys?
- Where this week have you witnessed God's abundant care for yourself or others?
- Which verse of the Psalm will influence your prayers or shape your action in the week ahead?⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Christine Dutton

Hymn:

594 STF – Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us OR

418 STF – We have a gospel to proclaim

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray.

Jesus said:

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Call: In our need

Response: Bring your abundant life

Holy God,

You know, call and care for your people by name, as the Shepherd cares for the sheep.

Hear our prayer as we pray for your world, for others and for ourselves.

Call: In our need

Response: Bring your abundant life

Holy God,

You have created a world where when resources are fairly shared, there is enough food and water for people, livestock, and vegetation.

For those whose lives and livelihoods are vulnerable because of drought, famine and flood, we pray for your wisdom and guidance for all seeking to grow and provide enough food, clean water and safe housing.

Call: In our need

Response: Bring your abundant life

Holy God, Jesus taught of the gate and the sheepfold.

Forgive us when we have created barriers and divisions resulting in exclusion. We pray for areas of the world where these divisions have led to war and conflict. We pray for an openness of heart and generosity for our world leaders but also for ourselves so that in our relationships, our communities and our churches all may experience the fullness of life, acceptance and love that Jesus offers.

Call: In our need

Response: Bring your abundant life

Holy God,

Jesus illustrates through his teaching that caring for each other, and particularly those who are vulnerable is an essential aspect of faith and discipleship.

We pray for all experiencing hardship, loss, uncertainty and fear. May we follow your example and show us how to reach out to those who this week may need a reassuring word or a helping hand.

Call: In our need

Response: Bring your abundant life

Holy God,

We praise you that you call us by name and care for us. In the quiet we bring before you our own needs and prayers for the week ahead, seeking your strength and guidance to face the joys and sorrows, upheld by your love.

Call: In our need

Response: Bring your abundant life

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of the forests and fields,

Your blessings are bountiful, like the harvest.

As we look out into the world this week, may each of us know gratitude for your love for us.

And may we, and may these gifts, always be used to bless and equip others,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling OR

311 STF – The day of resurrection, earth, tell it out abroad!

Blessing

The love of Christ flows through you.

The peace of God echoes around you.

The grace of the Spirit moves with you.

As you leave this time, this space, may you know the presence of the Triune God, blessing your path, guiding your feet, encouraging your next step, in the journey of discipleship.

Go in peace.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Christine Dutton

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker