

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
30th April 2023



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine OR

156 STF – From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

646 STF – Come and let us sweetly join OR

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do

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

Hymn:

513 STF – Take this moment, sign and space OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

619 STF – Thanks for friends who keep on loving OR

516 STF – What shall I do my God to love, my Saviour

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

657 STF – You give rest to the weary

Blessing

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Call to worship

Loving God,

We come before you as unique individuals,
Ready to acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses,
Ready to recognise the value of others, to value the difference,
Ready to hear your call as it morphs and changes,
Ready to hear your accepting voice and all that frees us to consider,
Ready to notice,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine OR

156 STF – From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun

Opening Prayers

Living, loving God, we come to offer you our praise today.
You are an awesome, Creator who made the stars and the wild landscapes,
And yet you are an intimate, grace-filled Spirit who knows every hair on my head.

Come close to us, this day, as we worship you and sing your praise,
Reveal yourself to us, O Lord, we pray.

Let us give you thanks and praise for all that we have received,
For the blessings of this day,
For the opportunities of the week ahead,
For the joy and the laughter and the hope and the healing of the week just gone.

Here we are Lord, saying thank you.

Come close to us, this day, as we pray and listen to your word,
Reveal yourself to us, O Lord, we pray.

Let us turn away from all that we have done wrong,
Letting go of sin and shame and guilt and pain,
As we confess our short-comings, and know that you have already forgiven us,
accepted us, invited us into your family.

Here we are Lord, saying thank you.

Come close to us, this day, as we pray and listen to your word,
Reveal yourself to us, O Lord, we pray.

We bring these, and all our prayers, in Jesus' name,

Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Jane Bingham

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

How many of you own a cat, a dog, or maybe another type of pet?

If you do, no doubt you will have named them. Often when we use that name, the pet will come close to us – though I guess this depends on the kind of pet, and how well the training has gone!?

We might use their name because we want to keep them from doing something that isn't very good for it (like playing near the road) or because you like them and want them to come over for some cuddles and strokes and affection – particularly if you have a cuddly pet!

In other words, you want the animal to come to you because you care about it, right?

In today's scripture story, Jesus talks about something that's a lot like pets going to their owners when called. But instead of talking about pets and their owners, Jesus talks about sheep and their shepherd.

He says that sheep follow the shepherd because the sheep know the shepherd's voice and will follow the shepherd wherever the shepherd goes.

The reason that sheep do this is because they have learned that when they go where the shepherd goes, then they end up in places where they can eat, drink, sleep and be safe (which are things that sheep really like, by the way).

In other words, the sheep trust the shepherd because the shepherd cares for them and wants to help them live better.

The reason Jesus is talking about shepherds and sheep is because he's saying it is sort of the same thing with him and us: That he is like a shepherd, and we are like his sheep.

If we choose to follow Jesus, we will learn what he does, what is important to him, and what he says by reading the Bible stories about him.

So, the question for us is will we follow Jesus? Will we listen when he calls?³

Hymn:

646 STF – Come and let us sweetly join OR

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do

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

Hymn:

513 STF – Take this moment, sign and space OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

Reflections on the readings

I have come. I have come that you might have life, and life in all its fullness. Life to the full. Life in all abundance.

These are some of my favourite words in the English language, never mind in the New Testament. These are words I live by. This invitation to abundance, to life in all its fullness. This invitation into betterness, richness, fulfilment.

All We Can, the Methodist Church's vision statement, has as its vision statement: 'every person's potential fulfilled'. This is my favourite translation of John 10:10 – 'I came that every person's potential is fulfilled'. Yes please, amen, this is the world I live for and I think this is the discipleship I feel part of and the world I want to help build. What about you? Do you want to be part of this?

Are you being called? Are you being invited to be a part of building a better future?

There are at least two types of calling. The call of God to all humanity to respond to the love of God. The second type of call is particular to each one of us, it is how we live our life in the knowledge and experience of hearing the voice of the Shepherd and of receiving the love of God.

We are all unique and so our path is different to everyone else in this room, in this community and the world. How we each best respond to God's love in our unique life is our particular calling – our vocation.

But how do we know how can best respond to God's love in our unique life?

The reading from John about the Good Shepherd tells us almost everything we need to know about how to respond to God's unique call - For a calling to emerge there needs to be a relationship between The Caller and the called.

This means that the key is for us to recognise the voice of The Caller – Jesus' voice.

It is simple to say but is a lifetime's work to really do and that is why it is good to learn new ways to pray. We do that by sharing our faith with each other as we read in Acts 2: 42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers"

This Acts reading also makes clear that our calling is not just an individual one. The whole church has a calling to pray, to share with each other, and to share the good news with others.

Just as we as individuals can have a special calling, so can a community. Each church community has its own calling, its own vocation.

What might God be saying to us as a community through this Bible reading today?

How would we feel if new people were 'added to our number' every week?

What would we do differently?

We would put out more chairs!

But the new people will not just be here to sit in the chairs, they will be here to join in, to change us as we change them and God changes us all.

Imagine if this were a reality.

It would mean there were more Christians out in this community making a difference in their places of work and with their family and friends, we might as a church be able together to be involved in more social justice work, we could make more of the world a better place, which would be signs of awe and wonder. They would be signs of hope. We would be praising God.

We said earlier that the more we pray the more we know how to pray, and then we learnt from Acts that the more we share our faith stories with one another the more we learn from one another which means we will learn more ways to pray. And the more we pray the better we get at knowing what is God's voice and what is our own.

A wise woman from the 16th Century called Mary Ward learnt that if we pray in a way that makes us feel like a failure, then although that way of praying might be good for others or for ourselves at other times in our lives if it is drawing us further away from God it is not helpful for now. So if you have tried prayer and it has made you feel like a failure – rather than give up, try another way of praying.

Four ideas for prayer:

1. Every time you wash your hands you could say The Lord's Prayer
2. At the end of the day jot down 3 things you are grateful for,
3. If you have the internet check out some ideas on there,
4. We could find time together to share how we pray and we can learn from each other, like they did in the early Church as we read in Acts.

The more we are able to discern God's voice the more we will be able to work out what is our unique path – our calling, our vocation, both as individuals and as a community here.

In a moment we will listen to short Psalm, as you listen, listen out for Jesus' voice. This Psalm was written as a lament as the poet who wrote it was in distress. But how about we read it with the knowledge that today is Vocations Sunday

Read Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will 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 your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Let us all sit quietly for one minute and wonder; did you hear Jesus' voice in the reading? If so, what do you hear Jesus saying? If you didn't – don't worry! Enjoy the quiet.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

Hymn:

619 STF – Thanks for friends who keep on loving OR

516 STF – What shall I do my God to love, my Saviour

Prayers of intercession

Amongst uncertainty about our futures, we look to you, Lord God.

Amongst doubt, and fear and a desire to respond to your call, we look to you, Lord God.

Perhaps we know what we must do, perhaps our vocation is clear before us,

Perhaps we do not yet know; perhaps we have never been more confused about what we are supposed to do.

In this time, on this vocation Sunday, show us how we can respond to a world in need.

We spend a moment now, in quiet, bringing before you the situations on our hearts and minds which we wish to pray for. In the quiet, hear our prayers, Lord Jesus.

[Pause in quiet to allow people to pray].

We pray for all those affected by Covid 19, and all involved in responding to that virus, all those 'on the front line'.

By your grace, Lord Jesus, come amongst us.

Comforter and healer God, we pray for all who have been recently bereaved.

By your grace, comfort those of us who weep.

May we be an answer to pray today, in some mysterious way.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Grace has been given to us. We respond with what gifts we have. Use them, Lord God, to build your Kingdom here on earth.

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

657 STF – You give rest to the weary

Blessing

Know then that God is with you

Even as the days look different

Ask what you can do to make God's kingdom real for someone

Through what you do: prayer, chat, safe act of kindness

Know God is at work.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Jane Bingham