



The **Methodist** Church

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet – 3rd May

This short act of worship has been prepared and written
for you by Mrs Andrea Davies.

Call to Worship:

Loving God, we come to offer you our worship,
We come because you call us by name,
We come to be loved and to know your peace
And because we would enter at the gate of the Good Shepherd
So that we may know the abundant life offered by your son, Jesus
Christ.

Amen

*This first hymn is a very old one but for me it sums up all the reasons for being
positive and very thankful in these strange and difficult times.*

Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell

To listen to this hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#) or [here](#). Close
the tab after the hymn.

1 All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;
come ye before him and rejoice.

2 The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make:
we are his folk, he doth us feed;
and for his sheep he doth us take.

3 O enter then his gates with praise;
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud, and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

4 For why, the Lord our God is good;
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

5 To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
the God whom heaven and earth adore,
from earth and from the angel host
be praise and glory evermore.

William Kethe (d. 1594)

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Prayer

Faithful God, in these difficult times we are not always able to recognise your voice amongst the chaos or discern your purpose in the strangeness.

When you call, give us the wisdom to know your voice.

When you lead, may we follow and if we falter, be our strength to carry on.

When you challenge and we are afraid, give us courage to respond and if we hesitate, be our resolve.

When you send may we go and if we stray, be our Shepherd.

When we need support may your mercy and truth be the rock upon which we lean.

When you give may we receive; and may we love, as you first loved us.

Through Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, Amen

(Adapted from a prayer by Paul Martin, Bolton and Rochdale District Choir)

Acts 2:42-47, “The Fellowship of the Believers”

To listen to this reading, by David Suchet from BibleGateway, in a new tab press **Shift** and **Ctrl** together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

John 10:1-10, “The Good Shepherd and his Sheep”

To listen to this reading, by David Suchet from BibleGateway, in a new tab press **Shift** and **Ctrl** together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

‘Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger's voice.’ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, ‘Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Reflection

Despite popular opinion, sheep are not silly creatures, they may have a flock mentality which means when one goes they all go, but they are far from stupid. They most certainly recognise their shepherd's voice and will not respond to strangers. Every evening for the last two or three weeks my husband has stood at the gate, called his young ewes and they have come from field to shed, their shelter for the night. Even though I am not exactly a stranger they will not come in for me, my voice is not the right voice.

How much simpler life would be if we could always distinguish between the voice we should be listening to and all the other demands and distractions which pull us away from the way that God would have us go. Sheep, not being stupid at all, recognise that anyone sneaking into the sheepfold instead of entering by the gate is up to no good, someone they will not follow; definitely not their caring shepherd whose voice is immediately recognisable to them.

Jesus was addressing his remarks in this morning's gospel reading to the Pharisees. Just prior to this they had been refusing to believe that Jesus had given back his sight to a man blind from birth. They were refusing to acknowledge that Jesus might indeed have been sent from God. Jesus' use of the familiar, the imagery of the shepherd and his sheep is designed to show that there is only one true way to live, one true path to God. Unsurprisingly verse six tells us that the Pharisees did not understand the imagery Jesus was using, I think it more likely that they were choosing to ignore the real meaning of what Jesus was saying. The Pharisees were intelligent and educated, it is improbable that they could not see the point that Jesus was making. The problem was that they did not want to see it because it threatened their status quo.

I can understand how they felt. It is not easy to step out of our comfort zone in order to follow Jesus. I am reminded of the words of a verse from the hymn by John Bell,

**“Will you love the “you” you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you’ve found
To reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound
In you and you in me”**

In the same reading Jesus explains things more clearly for the benefit of the unbelieving Pharisees. He is not just the shepherd he is also the gate into the sheepfold an integral part of a new way of life. He is not only the guide and carer of the sheep but the entrance into the safety of shelter and good pasture. Jesus is offering us an abundant life to enjoy to the full; he is offering us the opportunity to let our faith make a difference to our life and to the lives of those around us.

He is offering himself to be one with us, as we are one with him.

The short reading from Acts describes the way those first Christian converts lived their lives. Their faith had reshaped the pattern of their days and drawn them together into strong, supportive communities. They joined together every day for fellowship and prayer and to listen to the apostles teaching. They lived communally and were generous with their money and possessions in order to help the needy. They adopted a selfless and caring way of life. Such a way of life might not appear convenient to many of us in these modern times but in the present circumstances hundreds, thousands of people in our communities have heeded the call and shown selfless commitment and caring attitudes even when they have needed to “quell the fear inside” in order to do so.

Today is not only the fourth Sunday of Easter when we are still celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is also Vocation Sunday. Traditionally this Sunday is devoted to hearing people’s testimonies and encouraging others to listen for the voice of God and what he might be asking them to do. I looked up the word “vocation” in the dictionary - “a strong feeling that you are suited to

do a particular job or to fulfil a particular role in life, especially one which involves helping other people.” This is so appropriate at this particular time in our lives.

We are so thankful to all those who have fulfilled their sense of vocation, above and beyond the call of duty and to all those for whom their job has become so worthwhile, no longer mundane, as they realise they are helping so many others in the community.

We only have to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, to follow his example of loving and caring to know the way that we should go. We may not be able to meet together for the time being but we are all part of his flock and through our faith in him we may be able to find the strength and comfort we need in order to deal with all that is happening throughout the world today. Our vocation may be quite simple, just to help others, as and when we can, under the present circumstances.

“Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm” (*Pope Francis “Week of Prayer 2020”*)

We are battered by possibly the greatest storm we shall ever experience in our lives and yet, if we listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd we may be offered the greatest opportunity yet to help others in his name. Every smile and every wave, every phone call, Facetime, text, e-mail or letter can make a difference to someone. The simplest actions can have wide-reaching results.

I should like to close by sharing this modern good shepherd, caring for the smallest of lambs,



“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”. Amen.

Prayer

The following prayer is inspired by today's psalm – Psalm 23

Shepherd-King, we pray for all those who do not know the security of your all-giving love

- **For those who have nowhere safe to live or sleep**
- **For those who do not have the most basic necessities of life, no clean water and little food**
- **For those who find it difficult to navigate a positive path through life**
- **For those who are ill, suffering, or grieving for those they have lost**
- **For all our frontline workers, whatever their job or profession, may they know the courage and comfort your presence gives**

We ask for your strength and support in the coming days but we know that your goodness and love is there for us, every day of our lives

Through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord,

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

And now we sing the modern version of Psalm 23:

Hymn: The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;

To listen to this hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

**1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
 he makes me lie in pastures green,
 he leads me by the still, still waters,
 his goodness restores my soul.**

**And I will trust in you alone,
 and I will trust in you alone,
 for your endless mercy follows me,
 your goodness will lead me home.**

**2 He guides my ways in righteousness,
 and he anoints my head with oil;
 and my cup - it overflows with joy,
 I feast on his pure delights.**

**3 And though I walk the darkest path –
 I will not fear the evil one,
 for you are with me, and your rod and staff
 are the comfort I need to know.**

Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

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Closing Prayer

**Go where God leads you,
Go that you may serve him,
And wherever you go, know that God is with you and in you.
May his abundant life fill your world, your church, your homes
and yourselves.
In the name of Jesus.
AMEN.**