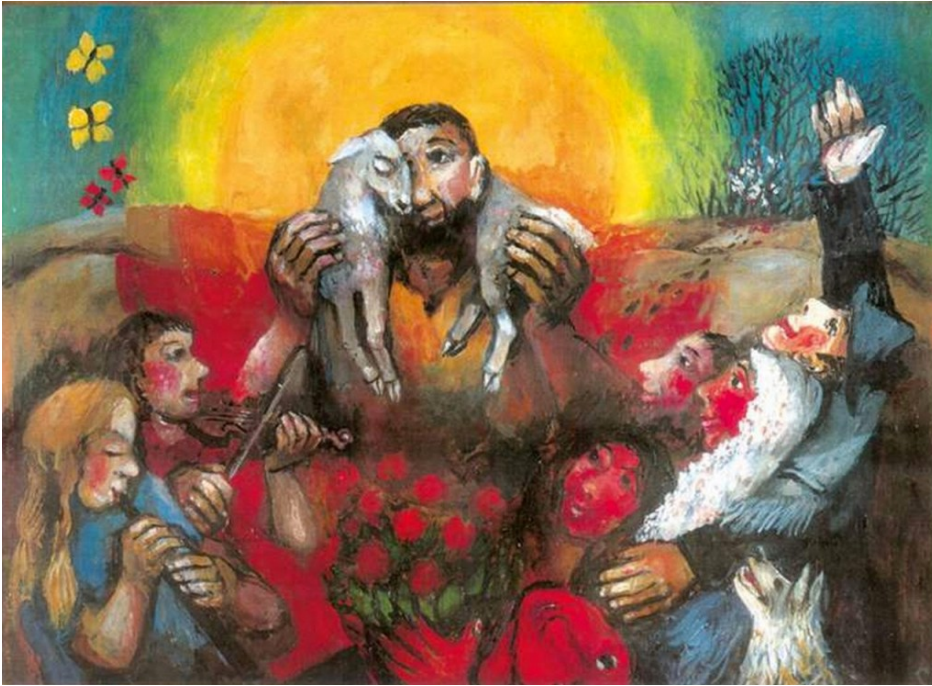




## ***Living in Abundance***



*The Good Shepherd by  
Sieger Köder  
(1925-2015), a priest  
and a prolific artist  
whose work shows the  
artistic influence of  
Chagall and a  
distinctive interpretation  
of biblical themes.*

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### **We Gather**

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*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.  
It would be appropriate to find a white cloth or scarf to signify the Easter season.  
Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us.  
Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

#### ***Introduction***

Christ is risen.

***Christ is risen indeed!***

Today we are reminded of the God who cares for God's people - the Shepherd, the protector; and we encounter a people who gather together to learn together, to break bread together and to share everything they have.

Today is often referred to as "Good Shepherd Sunday" with the readings offering a number of reflections on the image of God as "shepherd".

When sheep need protection, the shepherd takes them into a yard. In the yard they can be fed and watered and protected from foxes or wolves that would endanger them. For those of us who are "locked down" at the moment, perhaps we can see this time of isolation as a time that God is holding us, protecting us, inviting us to remain within the fold

until the danger has passed. And while we are protected, we look out for each other and we pray for those who are asked to leave the fold, to go to work to provide us with essential services, to care for people who are unwell, to keep us all safe.

Whilst we are unable to gather together physically, we are aware of our brothers and sisters who are part of our Church family across this region.

Each of us gathers in our homes, holding the worship resources, or looking at them on a screen. And we are aware of brothers and sisters in Christ who gather all over the world in the same way.

And so we take this moment, this time, we set everything else of our “doing” aside, and we still our hearts and minds, seeking the breath of the Holy Spirit as She breathes new life into our lives.

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

We recognise the stewardship of the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation for the land on which we gather today.

From river to ocean  
from campfire to hearth  
may the First People  
who have cared for this land  
be blessed.

From breath to song  
from step to dance  
may those who follow your Songlines  
guide us on the journey  
to living honourably in this place.

From greeting to Amen  
from silence to chorus  
may our worship  
join with the voices  
of the First Peoples  
of this Land.

(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler

### **Call To Worship**

Christ is risen!

***Christ is risen indeed!***

We pray...

Gathering God, you call each one of us by name.

We know your voice.

We know your love and grace.

Today, your flock is scattered throughout the world,  
and yet, as you call us, we draw close to you and to all your flock.

Spirit of God, move amongst us today.

### **Sing - All Are Welcome**

Chris Brunelle on guitar: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Izmbly\\_wi9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Izmbly_wi9Y)

Or a version with lyrics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js8RtT0mJpc>

## **Prayer of Praise**

God, who calls us and leads us,  
we long to know your voice through thick and thin.  
We long to rest in your care for all of our needs.  
We hold out our hands as a sign of our desire to hear you and follow you.  
And we are grateful that we we also encounter you through the love and care of our  
neighbours. Amen.

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

## **A time of reflection and confession**

Psalm 23 was also in the readings only a few weeks ago, just 2 weeks before Easter. It was the first week of us being unable to meet in person. That Psalm is so familiar to us, and is often the place we go when we feel ourselves in despair, “walking through the valley of the shadow of death”. You might like to read Psalm 23 for yourself now.

And you might like to engage with Psalm 23 in a new way, in words that I think we have discovered again for ourselves in these past weeks:

### **It's Familiar...**

When the community is a shepherd,  
then no one will want.  
Imagine everyone having  
a safe place to lie down,  
water to drink,  
education to restore the soul,  
and a meaningful path  
of work or retirement –  
for God's sake, God's sacred.

There are many dark valleys  
of illness, loss, depression,  
addiction or fear,  
but when there are companions –  
with a walking stick of guidance  
and a staff of assistance –  
then there is comfort.

Imagine the community's table set  
with the kind of generosity  
that changes enemy into friend,  
the greatest honour anointing a stranger  
and every empty cup  
of the most vulnerable overflowing.

Surely, then our breaking bread  
and all our prayers  
will mean something,  
and our neighbours' goodwill follow.  
No one will worry as much about  
personal God's-house-dwelling,  
as the community's hospitality to others –  
Day by day by day by day  
and all our lives long.

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**Listen:** The Lord's My Shepherd I'll Not Want - Stuart Townend  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

We pray...

God, we confess that we can be scared to hear your voice, out of fear of what we may need to let go of to follow you.

We stray, following ways that entice us and distract us from knowing you.

We substitute pride of possession for participation in your beloved community.

We resist gathering at your table because of who else you invite.

Forgive us, we pray.

Return us to you and your steadfast love.

Lead us in your right paths all our days.

Help us trust and abide in you always. Amen.

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

### **Words of Assurance**

Children of God, hear the good news!

God, who abounds in compassionate love that we cannot limit or bind, forgives us.

Praise be to God! Amen.

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

Christ is risen!

***Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!***

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## **We Listen for God's Voice**

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*For a video of the Readings and Reflection, go to:*

<https://vimeo.com/413881776/88aa2da8d5>

### **Reading:** Acts 2:42-47

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

<sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

### **Reading:** John 10:1-10

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.'<sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>7</sup> So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the

gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.  
<sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

## Reflection

God, in whom we find the love of a shepherd, a protector, a comforter, a guide, may we hear, follow and embody this love in all the days and in all the ways of our lives. May words and deeds joyfully testify to the abundance of your faithful love for us and for all. Amen.

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Hear Jesus' words for you:

I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly!

This passage from John's gospel is the first half of Jesus' use of the image of the shepherd in describing his “pastoral” role in gathering and caring for his followers. “I am the gate”, he says in John 10:8 and later in verse 11, “I am the good shepherd”.

The sheep know the voice of the shepherd and follow him out into the world. They won't get led astray by strangers because they know the voice of their shepherd.

And the promise of the shepherd is that they will be led to life in abundance.

When we talk about the universality of the gospel, good news for all the world, it is worth remembering that the imagery of the shepherd and sheep does not work for everyone.

When I worked in Asia, sheep were not common.

But most animals when they are cared for by the same person day in day out will respond to that person's voice. Our dairy farmers know that! And the people of Cambodia who have chickens or even buffalo know how their animals respond to the one who feeds and protects them.

And for me this passage raises two angles.

One is about Jesus - the one who promises to nourish and nurture us, the one who promises to lead us to abundant life. When I go searching for fulfilment in other places and am inevitably disappointed, I need to be reminded of God's promise to nourish, nurture, protect and guide me into abundant life. Perhaps, for you, that is enough today.

The other angle is about me - as a follower - do I know the voice of the One who cares for me and protects me, and am I prepared to follow?

Do I spend enough time in the Scriptures and in prayer to know the voice of Jesus, to know the voice of God's Spirit as she prompts me and nudges me deeper into the love and grace of God's way of being?

And am I prepared to follow or would I rather do my own thing and wander off on my own? Perhaps I think I know a better way to go? Or perhaps I would rather stay safely in the pen and not go anywhere at all?

Jesus reminds us today - “I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture” (10:9) and “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (10:10).

There are some big questions confronting the church today, in the midst of this pandemic. Questions like:

How can we be church when we are not allowed to gather?

How do we care for one another?

How do we share the love of Jesus with our neighbours when we are not allowed to be in the same space together?

How can we share in those parts of our faith that hold us and nurture us, like Holy Communion?

And perhaps even:

When we are allowed to gather again, what kind of church do we want to be?

So it is helpful to be taken back to the foundations of what we call the church today, to Acts chapter 2 where everything was new and the church was just beginning to form its identity and shape. Acts 2:42 tells us that the early followers of Jesus, the early Christian disciples, devoted themselves to 4 things:

- teaching
- fellowship
- breaking bread
- prayer

As we seek to hear the voice of Jesus and to follow, perhaps we can refocus our energy into these 4 areas:

- teaching - where are we seeking teaching? Here? Are we attending a Bible Study Group? Do we have a group of fellow disciples with whom we can discuss and wrestle with the Scriptures and allow ourselves to be challenged and stretched? Who are we offering teaching to? Are we thinking about ways we can continue to teach our children and grandchildren about the ways of Jesus and the love of God?
- fellowship - it is impossible to gather at the moment, but how are we sharing in fellowship with one another? Phone, email, Zoom, Facebook, even the traditional pen, paper and a stamp! What commitment might we make to fellowship once we are allowed to gather again?
- breaking bread - in the community of Acts, this was about more than Holy Communion. It was about offering hospitality around a meal. And it was about remembering Jesus as they shared the meal together. As we struggle with how to celebrate Communion while we are unable to gather, and we struggle with sharing meals together, what does this look like when we are allowed to open our homes again?
- prayer - this never ceases, I hope! Again, though, the Acts church speaks of prayer as not only individual prayer, but corporate prayer, prayer together with other disciples and followers of Jesus. How might you foster family prayer time in your homes at this time? Are there people you can gather with to pray using technology like Zoom or a conference call on the phone? And then what commitment to praying together might we make when we are allowed to pray together in person?

And through all of this, how are we helping other people to recognise the voice of Jesus and to invite them join in the life-changing choice to follow Jesus?

This time of isolation has been really hard on some of the people in our community who are most vulnerable. May they hear the voice of Jesus in you - in your call, in your email, in your offer of love and support.

And may you hear the voice of Jesus and know life in abundance!

Let us pray,

God of Life, we have heard your voice calling us by name.

As we seek to follow you, guide us and protect us, we pray.



Prompt and nudge us to be signs of your love in the world.  
As we are separated physically from each other, help us to reflect on what it means to prioritise teaching, fellowship, hospitality and prayer and help us to be willing to be re-shaped and re-formed when we are next able to gather in person. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Listen:** O Let the Son of God Enfold You

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjVLUY\\_dNLk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjVLUY_dNLk)

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## We Respond

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### Prayer for Others

O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.

For when we lack – food, water, safety, rest, purpose, love...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.**

For when we walk through the deepest valleys of uncertainty, fear, evil, death...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.**

For when we need correction and guidance...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.**

For when you provide healing, safety, food, drink, companions...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.**

For when goodness and steadfast loving-kindness pursue us...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.**

For when you receive us in your abode...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life.**

For all of your people and creation...

**O God, our good shepherd, in you is fullness of life. Amen.**

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

*Spend some time praying for people who are on your heart and mind - either in silence or with others who may be nearby. Pray for:*

- family, friends, neighbours*
- people you know who are ill*
- people who are struggling financially or who are lonely*

*God we give thanks that this week we have heard that here in our community, the spread of Covid-19 seems to have slowed. We give thanks for the efforts of health professionals, community leaders, police, and all who have worked tirelessly to protect us. We pray for continued strength, wisdom and patience for us all as we come to terms with what it means to live with the threat of illness for some time yet.*

*We pray for teachers and students as they begin to return to schools. Protect teachers as they go about their work, give students a sense of purpose and peace, and ease the uncertainty and anxiety of families who worry for the well-being of their children and loved ones.*

*We pray for your Church at this time - scattered - yet united in your love. Nudge and prompt us, open our eyes to see ways in which we can be your hands and feet in the world today. Give us courage to engage with a changed and changing world.*

## Offering

*In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to breathing life in the world around us.*

*If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.*

*We pray...*

O God, may our offerings of money, possessions, time, and self be used to provide for the needs of your people. May they be a source of joyful testimony to you, your compassion, and your provision in our world. Amen.

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

## Notices

*Keep an eye on the website, facebook page and the e-news for updates.*

*If you hear of or notice anyone needing a bit of extra support, please let Kath, Janice, or one of the Elders or Pastoral Partners know.*

**Listen:** Companions on the Journey

Check out this virtual version recorded just a week ago:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBxi0Q\\_rx2U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBxi0Q_rx2U)

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## We Go

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## Sending and Blessing

Beloved of God, we have been fed in this time of worship by our Good Shepherd, who leads us in right paths.

As we conclude this time together,

we go to follow Christ's example of feeding the hungry, comforting those who mourn, being companions with those who suffer, and rejoicing in God's abundant care.

We go, never alone.

God knows us and calls us by name, ever seeking us and receiving us home in love abounding.

*Seasons of The Spirit, Resources for Easter 4, 3 May 2020*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
***in the name of Christ. Amen.***

Christ is Risen!

***Christ is Risen indeed!***

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*Below is another way to engage with Psalm 23 - this would be a great way to start each day!*



## Psalm 23, Call to Worship – Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson, UK



by Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson

Inspired by Psalm 23

God is my shelter, my protection, and my guide.

I want for nothing, and I will practice thanksgiving!

God invites me to places of peace and beauty where wildflowers bloom and mountain streams flow.

God will restore me, and I will practice sabbath rest.

Even when anxiety and fear threaten to overwhelm me, when depression and despair have me in their hold,  
and it seems like death would be easier than life,

Even then, I will not fear.

I will trust in God and practice surrender.

For you, O God, nourish me even when trouble and enemies are all around.

You claim me as your own and call me by name.

My cup overflows, and I will practice joy!

God's compassion and grace are with me every day,

And I will make my home in God's love, justice and peace.