

Fourth Sunday of Easter + 3rd May 2020

A simple liturgy for use during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Today is 'Good Shepherd Sunday' a day that we traditionally think about our vocations and where God might be calling us to serve him in the church and in the world.

Light a candle. Sit for a few moments to gather your thoughts. Breathe deeply and slowly.

Gathering in God's Presence

We are the church.

We join our hearts together.

We listen for the word of God through scripture.

We feel each other's joy and sorrow as we share in prayer together.

Today, we will break bread together, and remember we are one,

Though we cannot be together; we are the church,

And we gather across time and space to worship God now.



Prayer of Brokenness

Almighty God, we confess our frustration and our anger.

We confess at times we should have held our tongue and didn't.

We confess at times we are distracted by things that will not matter tomorrow, and they consume our time today.

We confess that in our uncertainty, instead of trusting in You, we turn to the voices of fear.

Forgive us.

Call us into accountability,

to remind us that at times we say things online we would not say in person.

Call us to repent, to turn to empathy and understanding, and to seek Your wisdom.

In this world that has turned upside down,

we remember that You are our Rock and our Salvation.

You are what grounds us, keeps us steady, and will see us through.

Remind us that You have commanded us to love our neighbours as ourselves, even the ones who irritate us, for You loved us first, with all our faults and shortcomings.

May we turn our hearts to You,

and be filled with love for one another.

Amen.

Readings: Acts 2:42-47; John 10.1-10

In our first reading from Acts we hear how after the day of Pentecost, the believers began to gather in each other's homes, and thus the first churches began. They broke bread together, prayed together, and listened to the apostles' teachings. Those who believed lived together, shared everything together, selling their possessions and distributing the proceeds to the poor. What's more, the entire community was in awe, and these first churches had the goodwill of the people as they grew.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of being the gate for the sheep. A thief enters the sheepfold by stealth and climbing in, but the shepherd of the sheep enters by the gate. The sheep will not listen to the thief, and those who came before Jesus (*there were others in the first century claiming to be the Messiah*) were thieves and bandits, they only come to kill and destroy. Those who enter by the gate will be saved.

- What does it mean to be the church?
- How can we be the church and share the Good News when many of us are still inside our homes, unable to gather in person?
- What can we learn from the early church about who and how we share the Gospel, in this covid-19 world?
- Paul sent letters, sharing encouragement, and reminding the early churches how they were an example to others. The church in Acts did what they could to pray together and break bread together—perhaps we do that virtually now.
- How can we listen for the Shepherd’s voice in the midst of social media, protests, and opinions?
- How can we remember our roots, and who we are called to be right now?

Prayer

Holy One, as we turn to You, turn our hearts to each other.
May we reach out and check in with those we haven’t heard from,
to offer a listening ear, and to share the Good News.
May we seek to learn how we might pray for each other,
how we might help one another,
and how we can reflect Your image in the world.
Holy One, shine in us Your love,
so we might be shining lights of Your reflection around the world. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Music Video: If you can, click on the link to watch the Youtube clip or listen to a piece of music.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

Blessing

Good Shepherd,
Teach us to follow you
and to be faithful to calling you gave us
to be shepherds in your name.
Help us to do justice, love kindness,
and to walk humbly with You;
and wherever we may go,
may we follow Your path,
that in our comings, in our goings,
we may point to the Lamb and Shepherd
so that all may be gathered into your fold. Amen.

