

Virtual Church News

Sunday 3 May

4th Sunday of Easter

Welcome to Virtual Church News for the 4th Sunday of Easter.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email Jacqui.piper@btinternet.com



Spring Flowers in Kempston
Photo taken by Alison Walker

A Reading for the Week:

John 10:11-15

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep.'

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Dear all

When I was a curate in Crawshawbooth, Lancashire, I took a sheep called Lucky, to a local primary school for a school assembly. He was called Lucky because the local farmer had taken him into her home as a pet, rather than taking him to be slaughtered. The children loved Lucky, and thought it was hilarious when he left an enormous puddle in the middle of the assembly hall. Prior to this year, I remember another sheep, several years ago, who stole my sandwiches when I had stopped for some

lunch on Kinder Scout, in the Peak District. I am, therefore, a little distrustful of sheep, especially when I have a sandwich in my hand.

I would be a useless shepherd. Apart from believing they are not very bright, I find it inexplicable that anybody can tell the difference between sheep. Some years ago, a sheep called Dolly was all over the papers because scientists claimed that they had cloned her. I mean who would know, when sheep look so indistinguishable?

The good shepherd knows his sheep. He does not confuse them with any other sheep. He looks after them, and does all he can to keep them from danger.

'I am the good shepherd,' Jesus said. It was one of eight times that Jesus began a sentence with 'I am,' in John's Gospel, and it was the ancient phrase that was used by God to describe himself; 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14). When Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd,' he is, of course, referring to himself as God, and echoing the words of the 23rd Psalm 'The Lord is, indeed your Shepherd, and that is who I am.'

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax

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When I started teaching in 2003, I remember walking into a very challenging year nine class. Initially, I could not cope with their behaviour. When, after a while, I stopped seeing them as a mass of naughty young people, and started building up a relationship with them, I began to see them as individuals with their own hopes, fears and needs. They began to trust me, and their behaviour changed. The Lord is the shepherd who knows and recognises you, who understands your every need, and wants you to have a relationship with him. In him, the good shepherd, you get to know the God who loves you because of who you are.

I am probably mistaken in thinking that sheep can be blindingly stupid animals. The second week in February, we woke up to find that three sheep had moved into our garden at the back of the vicarage. They had escaped through gaps in a fence. Thankfully, our Labrador, Nutmeg, is far too timid to have hurt them, and when she realised how large these sheep were, she ran back into our house and refused to go out. It could have been dangerous if we had a bigger dog.

No matter how much the farmer tried to secure the fence afterwards, the sheep just kept on escaping, sometimes in front of traffic, and at other times, dangerously close to the river. What the sheep did not realise, is that by escaping from the safety of the field, they were putting themselves in the most appalling danger.

Neighbours, for some reason, seemed convinced that these were the vicar's sheep. Day after day, therefore, we would get phone calls from people asking us if we would come and collect our sheep from their property.

The Good shepherd is deeply aware of the dangers that we face.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as he pleaded that God would take 'this cup,' from him, he then focusses his prayer on us;

'Keep them from the evil one.' (John 17:15).

In these times, he will not necessarily keep you from illness, or isolation, because you and I are in the same boat as everyone else. When he faced the cross, however, he placed himself between you and the things that can really hurt you. In the Lord's prayer, we pray 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' This is a prayer that the good shepherd will protect you from the things that do the most damage to you; from bitterness, anger, and fear. Of these, it is the fear in these times that is the most terrible. The perfect love of the perfect shepherd pushes away all that fear (1 John 4:18)

Inevitably, we get tangled and caught in fences and traps, like all sheep do. The Good Shepherd loves you whatever, but still he tells you that you will only find that safety if you put your trust in him and follow him. In his eyes, staying in a field surrounded by dodgy fences is not good enough for his sheep. He wants us to be a pilgrim flock who would follow him to a place of hope and healing. Only he knows the safe path to follow, so he asks you to stay close to him. It is only in placing our trust in him, that we will be able to negotiate this strange and terrifying wilderness of uncertainty we find ourselves in.

'He is your shepherd, who will give you all that you need. He will give you a place of rest beside still waters, and he will give you strength and guide you along safe paths. Even though you find yourself in terrifying places, he will take away your fear, and his rod and staff will protect you.' (Psalm 23:1-4)

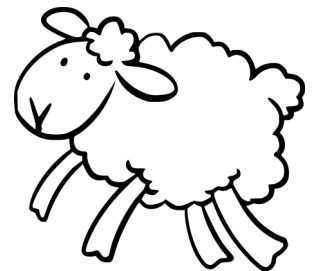
Amen.

God bless

Eric

Please contact me any time you need to.

My numbers are 01234 852241/07805 879537



Daily Hope

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus. Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.



Proms Praise Festival

Usually held in the Royal Albert Hall, this festival would have been held on Sat 2 May. Instead there will be a virtual concert at 7.30pm on Sat 2 May at <https://www.allsoulsmusic.org/events/a-festival-of-hope-virtual-prom-praise/>. If you miss it on Saturday, you may also be able to listen to it afterwards.

For the Children (& young at heart!)

Activities: This week's story is all about sheep. Can you create a picture or collage of a sheep? We would love to see it! Why not ask your parent or carer to send us a photo on email to jacqui.piper@btinternet.com

Do you know what 'abundance' means? If not, ask your parent or carer, or look it up in a dictionary. Think about what sheep need to be looked after? What sort of ground do they need for their pasture? What might be 'abundance' for a sheep?

Think about how you can help your family and friends live a full and happy life in abundance?

Some songs to sing along to:

The Baa Baa Song (He's the good shepherd)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGPQX3vQtU8>

This is living <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiWwh12Fnos>

The Lord's my shepherd <https://>

Church Services on the TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship - from Salisbury Cathedral as it celebrates its 800th anniversary this year.
- 10.45am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from Bangor Cathedral in Wales. Led by the Very Reverend Kathy Jones.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. A celebration of faith and farming. Kate Bottley revisits some of Songs of Praise's most uplifting agricultural stories.
- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Chapel of St John's College, Cambridge.

Wednesday 6th May:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Tewkesbury Abbey.

Hymns and Devotional Music

Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, and his wife Irene are live streaming hymns and other devotional music at 10am each Sunday (before the Zoom service). Find this and other music at <https://www.facebook.com/tim.grantjones>



Online Services

Join the Church of England on its website or Facebook page for this week's 9am Virtual Service.

You can also download the order of service and the sermon in pdf format from the Church of England website.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

Many other churches and cathedrals across the country are also providing online services.

Please pray with me

Risen Christ,
faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:
teach us to hear your voice
and to follow your command,
that all your people may be gathered into one flock,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen



Join us for a Service on Sunday

The Zoom login details for services will be sent out in the covering email to members of our church community. If anyone else would like these, please do get in touch! Everyone is welcome to join us.

Discovery Group

Meeting via Zoom on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month at 8pm (after the clap!). Get in touch if you would like the login details.

Supporting Good Mental Health

The Church of England has produced some reflections on good mental health to support people given the challenging times we are currently living in.

These can be found on the Church of England Website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/faiith-action/mental-health-resources/supporting-good-mental-health/supporting-good-mental-health>

If you do not have access to the internet and would like a hard copy of these, please call Jacqui on 356993 to request a copy.

For your prayers

- All front-line workers
- The late Graham H and his family.
- All those who have died from Covid-19

Our prayer group meets at 8pm (after the clap!) on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Get in touch if you would like the login details.

Bedford Foodbank



Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever.

Donations of food can now be placed in a box which in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. Items currently needed include pasta, UHT fruit juice, rice pudding, tinned carrots, tinned peas, rice (1kg), tea bags (40) and UHT milk.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 852241 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695