



Easter 4

Worship@Home May 4, 2020

All Are Welcome

Marty Haugen TiS 821

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

**All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

**All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:

a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.

Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

**All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.

Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

**All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as
words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

**All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

'Marty Haugen

Call to worship

We gather here, listening for the voice of the
giver and guardian of our lives.

**God comes to us as a good shepherd,
calling us by name.**

We gather here, longing to follow in just
paths of life.

**God comes to us as a good shepherd,
leading us in right ways.**

We gather here to follow and praise God,
**Whose good and steadfast love abounds all
of our lives.**

Acknowledgement of Country

We all gather on the lands and by the waters
of the First Peoples of this place: And we pay
our respects to their elders past, present and
emerging as an act of healing and reconciliation
in this Nation and in this land.





Easter 4

Worship@Home May 3, 2020



Welcome

Welcome to the Shearwater congregations and friends. Welcome to you at home using these resources! A special 'Hello' to our Aged Care friends who are also joining in.

Opening prayer

God, who calls us and leads us,
we long to hear your voice through our closed doors.

We long to rest in your care for all of our needs.
So, we hold out our hands as a sign of our desire to hear you,
and trust you and follow you.
Open to you and one another. Amen.

*Being **open** means we are **vulnerable**:
Vulnerable to the ways we hurt other people:
trespassing where we are not welcome:
Vulnerable to the ways our lives hurt and damage our planet:
Vulnerable to even damage ourselves.*

So that we may be open to healing and hearing the Gospel, let us confess our brokenness to the Good Shepherd

Prayer of confession

The Good Shepherd calls to one and all even you and me; offering forgiveness and love, restoration and celebration.
The Good Shepherd will leave the 99 to find the one of us lost, and restore us to life in community.

Hear these words of Jesus.

- "I am the gate for the sheep"
- "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"

Sin is forgiven

Thanks be to God



Theme

Today in our continuing Easter celebrations, we turn in our readings to the nature of this resurrected Jesus: We remember his teaching and ideas on ministry and relationship. He describes himself as a Good Shepherd. He describes himself as The Gate.

The most famous of psalms is all about a shepherd. In this version from the *New Zealand Book of Prayer* we think of how God is LIKE a shepherd.

Psalm 23

Dear God, you sustain me and feed me:
like a shepherd you guide me.
You lead me to an oasis of green,
to lie down by restful waters.
You refresh my soul for the journey,
and guide me along trusted roads.
The God of justice is your name.
Though I must enter the darkness of death,
I will fear no evil.
For you are with me,
your rod and staff comfort me.
You prepare a table before my very eyes,
in the presence of those who trouble me.
You anoint my head with oil,
and you fill my cup to the brim.
Your loving kindness and mercy will meet me every day of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of my God for ever.

²He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa





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Reflection:

Rev. Jennie Gordon

The image of the Good Shepherd in the gospel; the one who enters by the gate, who is recognised by the gatekeeper and whose voice is known by the sheep, is tightly tied to Psalm 23. When the words of John chapter 10 fell on the ears of the first hearers, they probably recalled the 23rd Psalm and saw the image through that lens.

Psalm 23 speaks of a deeply personal relationship with our God who is guide, provider and protector. In John's gospel when Jesus says "he knows his own sheep by name and leads them out", we sense a resonance with the image of the shepherd leading us beside still waters, leading us in paths of righteousness and being present with us even in the darkest times, through the valley of the shadow of death. Through the valley and out the other side, to whatever mystery awaits us. There's movement in the psalm as there is in the gospel reading – a 'going in' and a 'coming out', and all the time there is the sure presence of the One who knows us by name.

Whether we are feasting abundantly or fasting, resting in quiet places or travelling through the toughest times, we are not following or accompanied by a distant, dangerous stranger. We are following Jesus who is like a shepherd, a good shepherd, who knows us and loves us anyway, all of us, always.

The Gospel Reading John 10: 1-10

For these words of faith,
and Jesus the Word

Thanks be to God

Reflection:

Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

I have spent some time reflecting on why I struggle with the Good Shepherd image. For sure I really need the comfort it gives, and of that other picture of green, green grass and an overflowing cup in Psalm 23. Abundant grace and mercy sound fine, indeed awesome, to me.

But I wonder if the Good Shepherd image needs to be recovered, reimagined in new ways. Not for me are the old images of a very white skinned Shepherd Jesus, gentle, meek and mild. In the past, images of the Good Shepherd have allowed us to see the church as the gatekeepers, privileging some over others. Are we in the sheepfold a select and chosen few working toward perfection...or is the church a hospital for sinners? Does Christ stand at the gate and protect the vulnerable godly from contamination from the world...or is it Jesus who is the gate swinging wide open to call the diverse and seemingly un-loveable?

Perhaps the lectionary shows great wisdom by putting the Good Shepherd passages alongside the Acts vision of the generous and glad hearts of the believers who shared together all they had (as well as 1 Peter 1:19-25 call to respond in love to suffering).

As we reclaim and renew this image, let us also be renewed by it. Let it call us to simplicity and sacrifice, and to solidarity and connection. We can simply be great pasture, providing an abundance of nourishment and being a place for all people to flourish. Perhaps if our souls are being cherished and gently tended we will know the freedom and courage to act counter-culturally and alternatively in the world.





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The Communion Fast: Fasting not Feasting

Listen in to the life and practice of the early church, as captured in the Acts of the Apostles.

Read Acts 2:42-47

Bless this space:

Gathering at the table for Holy Communion is a central and mystical sacrament of our faith that we share together; the bread and the wine, the body and the blood. Instead of attempting to provide an 'at home' communion service, we're suggesting that this time of physical separation from each other and the common table might be seen as a time of fasting.

Fasting is part of our tradition and, when woven with prayer and patience can form in us a greater clarity and understanding of what is being withheld, a deeper spiritual appreciation and a holding of the delicious anticipation of the great feasting day when we can gather in homes and churches once more.

Here is a prayer to frame your fasting from the feast of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper:

*Jesus, at whose table I have found welcome,
and who sits beside me now
in the fasting from the feast,*

*Bless this space of holding back;
bless it with gratitude
for the times upon times
when I have opened my hand
and felt the solemn bread rest in my palm
and known the blessing of your holy brokenness
crumbling into my own.*

*Bless this space of holding back;
bless it with forgiveness
for the times upon times
when I have held the cup
and forgotten the cost of such a love
outpouring
and gulped the wine with scant regard
for the crushing of the fruit.
Bless this space of holding back;
bless it with hope
for the times upon times
when we will meet again
and open our hungry hands
and hold the brimming cup
and share this sacred meal
together.*

*Jesus, at whose table I have found welcome,
and who sits beside me now,
stay with me,
through the fasting to the feast,
and evermore, and evermore, Amen.*

Prayers of the People

Devoted as we are O God, to the breaking of the bread, we sit gently in the space that requires us to abstain until we can all be together again, gathered closely around your table of communion. Just like the early believers, for such a time as this we sit with the prayers, in awe of the signs of your love that we see around us when we are mindful of you.

Just like in Acts we are even more aware at this time of the need to gather around each other... even if it is in a different way to our usual routine. When we think of our congregations we are aware of particular people needing a sense of our prayers at the moment. We pray for them. We pray for all those in our communities who are finding the restrictions tough. For all those who are lonely and isolated. For all those who are ill whatever the cause. We especially hold in our hearts those who have been directly affected by this devastating illness. And we give thanks for the carers.

Prayer continued P5





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Prayer continued

We are aware that there is a whole new group of people in need. Some have lost their sense of security, some have lost their whole income and some have lost their jobs. Help us to respond as a community modelled on the early believers, that we live simply and share all that we can. Help us to have the courage to give whatever we don't need. Help us to appreciate whatever we have and to enjoy it with open and glad and generous hearts.

We pray for our leaders as they navigate us through the current challenges and new ones to come in the days ahead. Lead us back into full community to share around your table once more, In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Offering

As we come to our time offering we give thanks for all that we have received, and just like the early believers we ask for generous hearts that share all that we can with all in need.

Reflection on Acts 2: 42-47 Rev. Ian Turnnidge

These words of the Acts of The Apostles are always warm to read. Filled with hopefulness, equity and harmony. Some writers feel this is a momentary event in the life of the early church. Some think that this account is an ideal: an aspirational expression of what living the Good News could look like.

In our context of living safely at home, for the sake of all our community's health, what might these words encourage us to do this week as we remain isolated?

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

- Can I use this time to devote myself to some theological reading, Bible reading, or devotional reading?
- Can I try to be more active in my intentional phone calls to members of the congregation and wider?
- Can I make an opportunity to pray more consciously this week?
- When I sit to eat my meal, can I pause in gratitude and thanks for all our community sitting like I am too, apart from others?

"Day by day, as they ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people."

May this story remind us of the warmth of fellowship and how we may be active in our fellowship this day, and everyday.





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Blessing

God, who leads us in every wilderness,
 Good Shepherd who calls our name
 Loving Spirit who breathes life into us
 We have listened for your voice.
 May we who live in our homes,
 Live abundantly in our homes
 And so bring life and love to this day, and
 Bring life and light to all we know and love
 In Christ we pray, Amen.

Hymn: We are One in the Spirit

We are one in the Spirit
 We are one in the Lord
 We are one in the Spirit
 We are one in the Lord
 And we pray that all unity
 May one day be restored
*And they'll know we are Christians
 By our love, By our love
 Yes, they'll know we are Christians
 By our love*

We will walk with each other
 We will walk hand in hand
 We will walk with each other
 We will walk hand in hand
 And together we'll spread the news
 That God is in our land

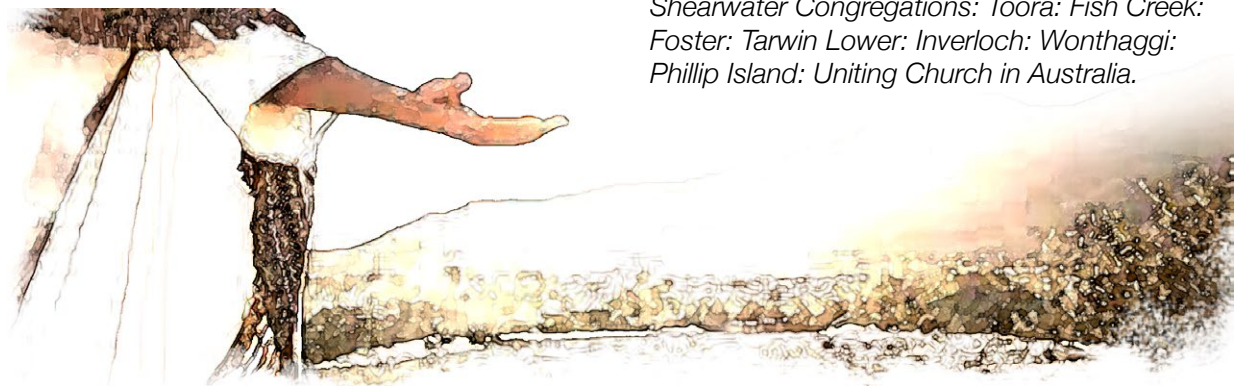
We will work with each other
 We will work side by side
 We will work with each other
 We will work side by side
 And we'll guard each one's dignity
 And save each one's pride

All praise to the Father
 From whom all things come
 And all praise to Christ Jesus His only son
 And all praise to the Spirit
 Who makes us one
*And they'll know we are Christians
 By our love, By our love
 Yes, they'll know we are Christians
 By our love*

³Peter Scholtes

Today's service has been prepared by Rev Jennie Gordon, (Psalm), Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson, Prayers and Blessings, and Rev. Ian Turnnidge opening liturgy and reflection.

Shearwater Congregations: Toora: Fish Creek: Foster: Tarwin Lower: Inverloch: Wonthaggi: Phillip Island: Uniting Church in Australia.



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