

*The Benefice of St Mary the Virgin,
Higham Ferrers with St John the Baptist,
Chelveston-cum-Caldecott*

Easter Celebration



for
the Fourth Sunday
of Easter



*Welcome as we continue to meet in this new way
to celebrate the Easter season.*

*We hear how our risen Lord Jesus appears to his
disciples*

*and there is excitement and confusion in equal
measure!*

Some believe immediately, and some doubt.....

Today's service was recorded at home by members of
The Ministry Team and their families.

Today we return to a conversation before Jesus' death
and resurrection between him and the Pharisees and his
disciples where he talks about himself as the good
shepherd

and the gate of the sheepfold.

Unlike those leaders who have deceived their people
and let them down, Jesus is the one who knows and
loves his people as a shepherd knows and cares for
their sheep.

He is the means through which we can have freedom
and confidence to live life in all its fullness –

we can trust him as our leader -

for he was prepared to die for us, to give us life.

*Please join in with the prayers and hymns as we
worship together.*

The Gathering

Lesley greets us:

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you all.

And also with you.

Opening Acclamation

Lord of life,
you lead us on our journey of faith
as a shepherd leads the sheep
Lead us Lord, lead us on.

Call us by our name
and fill us with the joy of your new life
as we journey on
Lead us Lord, lead us on.

Lead us to risk, to grow,
and to walk the path you have opened for us.
Lead us Lord, lead us on.

And let us rejoice that every place is your place.
In the name of Christ, the risen one. Amen.

We sing together:

Hymn

**Jesus lives! thy terrors now
can, O death, no more appal us;
Jesus lives! by this we know
thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us.
*Alleluia.***

**Jesus lives! henceforth is death
but the gate of life immortal:
this shall calm our trembling breath,
when we pass its gloomy portal.
*Alleluia.***

**Jesus lives! for us he died;
then alone to Jesus living,
pure in heart may we abide,
glory to our Saviour giving.
*Alleluia.***

**Jesus lives! our hearts know well
naught from us his love shall sever;
life nor death nor powers of hell
tear us from his keeping ever.
*Alleluia.***

**Jesus lives! to him the throne
over all the world is given:
may we go where he is gone,**

rest and reign with him in heaven.

Alleluia.

words: Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769)

music: Henry Gauntlett (1805-1876)

Prayers of Confession – led by Linda

Lord Jesus, you are the gatekeeper
opening to us the path of life,
but we have chosen other ways;

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

Good Shepherd, you know us
and call us by name
but we have turned aside
to follow the voice of the stranger;

Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

Living Lord, you have come
that we might have life in all its fullness,
but we have erred and strayed from your ways
like lost sheep;

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

Absolution – Lesley

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

*We sing together the song of the angels:
'Glory in the highest to the God of heaven'*

Gloria

**Glory in the highest to the God of heaven!
Peace to all your people through the earth be given:
mighty God and Father, thanks and praise we bring,
singing alleluias to our heavenly King.**

**Jesus Christ is risen, God the Father's Son:
with the Holy Spirit, you are Lord alone!
Lamb once killed for sinners, all our guilt to bear,
show us now your mercy, now receive our prayer.**

**Christ the world's true Saviour, high and holy one,
seated now and reigning from your Father's throne:
Lord and God, we praise you; highest heaven
adores:
in the Father's glory, all the praise be yours!**

*Words: Christopher Idle (b.1938),
based on Gloria in excelsis
Music: Noel nouvelet, French carol,
15th century, arr. Jeremy Jepson (b.1973)*

Collect – *led by Michelle*

Let us pray that we may walk the risen life of Christ in glory.

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.**

First Reading – Acts 2.42-47 – *Read by Paul*

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Many were baptized and were added to the community. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 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, 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.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God



Celtic Alleluia – led by Keith & Jo – all join in singing:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Lord, you shepherd our souls;
lead us beside the still waters,
tend and feed us, dying to give eternal life!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Gospel – John 10.1-10 read by Michelle

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said to the Pharisees, 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. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Alleluia! This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily – Brenda



Psalm 23 – ‘The Good Shepherd’

1. The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd.

I always have more than enough.

2. He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love.

His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss.

3. That’s where he restores and revives my life.

He opens before me pathways to God’s pleasure

and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness
so that I can bring honour to his name.

4. Lord, even when your path takes me through
the valley of deepest darkness,

fear will never conquer me, for you already have!

You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way.

Your authority is my strength and my peace.

The comfort of your love takes away my fear.

I'll never be lonely, for you are near.

5. You become my delicious feast
even when my enemies dare to fight.

You anoint me with the fragrance of your Holy Spirit;
you give me all I can drink of you until my heart overflows.

6. So why would I fear the future?

For your goodness and love pursue me all the days of my life.

Then afterward, when my life is through,
I'll return to your glorious presence to be forever with you!

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Hymn:

**The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine for ever.**

**Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow
with food celestial feedeth.**

**Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,**

**and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me.**

**In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.**

**Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!**

**And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.**

*Words: Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877) based on Psalm 23
Music: DOMINUS REGIT ME John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876)*

Prayers to the Good Shepherd

led by Michelle, Georgie & Bella

Lord, we give thanks for the church,
for its teaching and fellowship,
for the ways we come together in worship and prayer,
even while we are apart.
We pray that we may always come before you
with reverence and awe.

We give you thanks for faithful stewardship,
for all who care for us and share what they have.

May your church use it's possessions aright,
to the relief of those in need and to your praise and glory.

Give us glad and generous hearts.

May we seek out and rescue the lost and the straying,
protect the young, and uplift any who are fallen.

Good Shepherd,
guide us and lead us.

We pray for all who walk in darkness
and in the valley of the shadow of death,
where hope may seem lost
and the way ahead unclear.

We remember all who are caught up in strife and warfare,
all who are struggling with illness and disease,
and in these days, all who are working to combat Coronavirus,
especially our NHS staff and all key workers.

We pray too for all areas of great poverty in our world,
all places where we have spoiled the environment
and have not taken care of your great gift to us in creation.
May we find ways that lead to joy and life in all its fullness.

Good Shepherd,
guide us and lead us.

Lord, as you have opened for us the gate of everlasting life,
help us to live life to the full.

May we help others extend their lives and their vision,
so that all may flourish.

Bless our homes and our loved ones with the fullness of life.
Make us useful members of the communities to which we belong.

Good Shepherd,
guide us and lead us.

We remember before you all whose lives are restricted
and limited by circumstance,
and the frustrations of lockdown.

We pray for all whose lives are impaired
through the cruelty or neglect of others.

We pray for all who are unwell –
may we help where we can to bring hope and assurance.

Good Shepherd,
guide us and lead us.

Lord, you open the gate of glory
that we may see the joy that awaits us.

We give thanks for all who have gone through
the gate of the Good Shepherd and are gathered safely home.

We pray especially for those known and loved by us
who have died recently.

Good Shepherd,
guide us and lead us.

Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd
and the gate of the sheepfold.
You lead us beside still waters
and nourish us with your love
strengthen us with your Spirit
and call us to follow you.

In the midst of our troubles and anxieties,
come among us as our Risen Lord
and speak to us your word of peace
and as we now reflect and continue in prayer as we listen to
music,
we hold before you all those for who we pray this day.

Music for Reflection and Prayer

J.S.Bach, Sheep may safely graze - *piano, Paul Barton (arranged by Egon Petri)*



We bring all
together

our prayers

as we pray in the words you have given us:

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.**

The Peace – led by Linda

The risen Christ came and stood
among his disciples
and said, 'Peace be with you.'
Then were they glad when they saw
the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the risen Lord
be always with you.
And also with you.



We are invited to share the Peace with those we are with, or to take a moment to think of those we love but cannot be with in the current situation, and of those with whom we are worshipping online today.

Hymn

**Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King.
To all the world glad news we bring:
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!***

**Praise we in songs of victory
that Love, that Life, which cannot die,
and sing with hearts uplifted high:
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!***

**Thy name we bless, O risen Lord,
and sing today with one accord
the life laid down, the life restored:
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!***

Words: Cyril Alington (1872-1955)

Music: Melody from Melchior Vulpius's Gesangbuch, 1609

Final Prayer – led by Michelle

Merciful Father,
you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,
and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again:
keep us always under his protection,
and give us grace to follow in his steps;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Blessing – Lesley

The Lord be with you
and also with you

Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep,
who has opened for you the gate of glory,
give you life in all its fullness
and lead you to life eternal;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy spirit,
come down upon you this day, and remain with you
always.

Amen

Easter Acclamation

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

