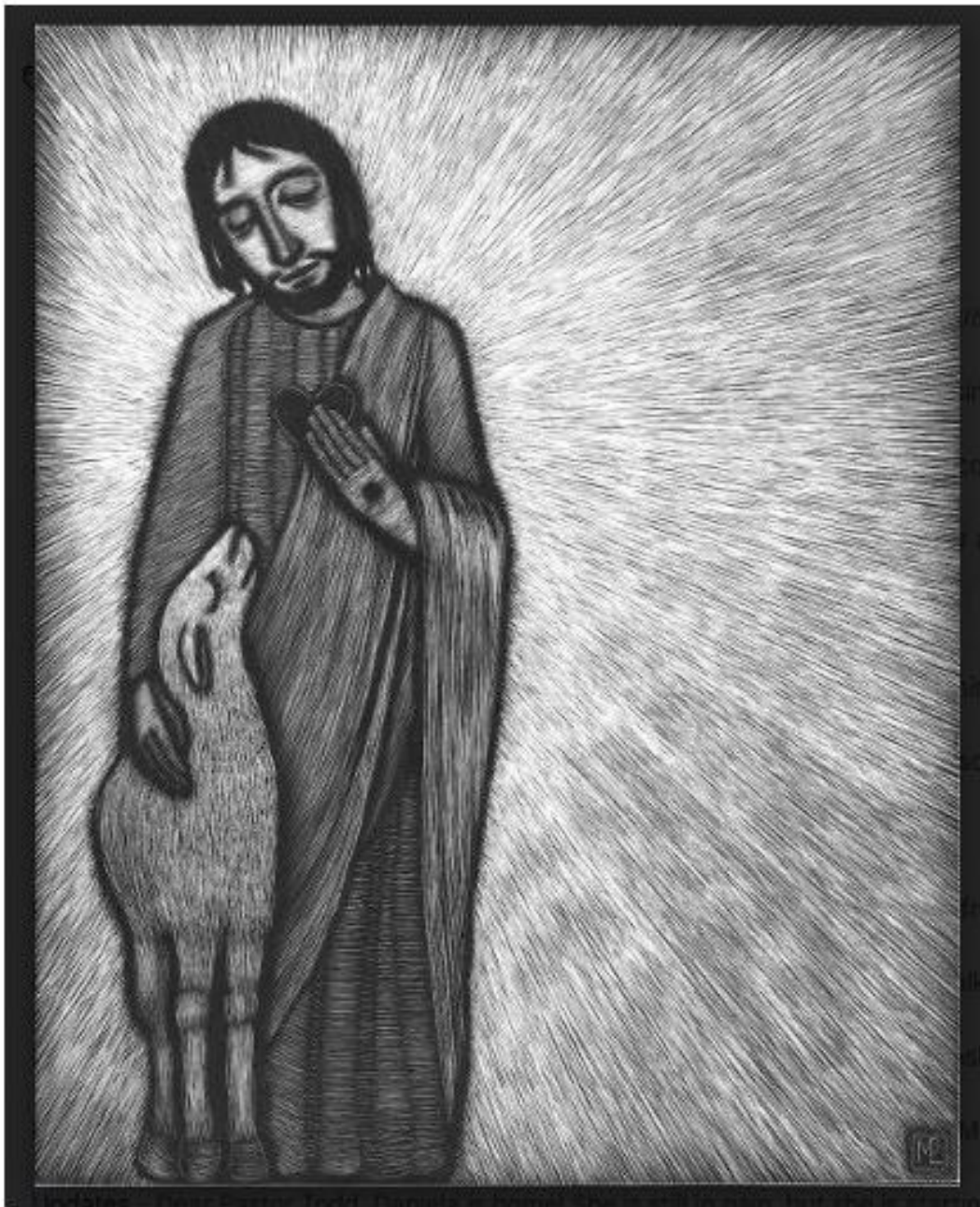


FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 30th, 2023



JESUS COMES that all may have life in Him.

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon

Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.

Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca
Business Manager: Karen McCumber business.manager@christlutheransc.ca
Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKT19c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may know the voice of our Shepherd and follow Him that sin and death may never pluck us out of Your hand. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Eph. 4: 17-24 Wednesday: 1 John 4: 7-14 Friday: 11 Cor. 5: 16-21
Tuesday: Eph. 4: 25-32 Thursday: Acts 17: 22-23 Saturday: Rom. 1: 18-25

Musician: 10 a.m. – Louise Gondosch
Reader: 10 a.m. – Dan Figueroa
Greeters: 10 a.m. – Ralph & Mary Muller

EVENTS THIS WEEK:

Today: 9:10 a. m. - Confirmation Class
10:00 a.m. - "The 4th Sunday of Easter + Good Shepherd Sunday"
1:00 p.m. - Visitation for Jim Decker
2:00 p.m. - Funeral for Jim Decker (SOUL)

Monday: 7:30 p.m. – Choir

Tuesday: 9:30 a.m. – Precious Moments
7:30 p.m. – Worship Committee Meeting

Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – NO SOUL

Saturday: 9:30 p.m. – Oakes Retreat on Tillsonburg

Sunday, May 7: 10:00 a.m. - Worship lead by Pastor John Makey

CONFIRMATION: after this morning, NO YOUTH CONFIRMATION CLASS until May 28th.

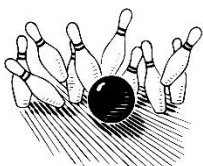
PRECIOUS MOMENTS: If you or someone you know would benefit from friendly conversation, a time for kids to play & sing; hear a Bible story and make a craft - please join us Tuesdays in the nursery area from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Coffee and tea are always on.

PASTOR HOFFES away from May 4-7 at a funeral in Regina, SK, in the event of emergency contact the office.

MARY MARTHA: *The following is our Mary Martha upcoming events:*

May 16th -- Bible Study—Sewing for Haiti
June 10th – Potluck

Please feel free to attend any or all of our Tuesday night events!



FREE FAMILY DAY BOWLING: Saturday, June 3, 2 - 4 p.m. Sign-up sheet is at back of church. Please sign up today is possible so the committee can make final details for location, etc. You can also email: secretary@christlutheransc.ca



They may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. Isaiah 61: 3

Where: Peace Lutheran Church, 60 Young St., Tillsonburg, ON

When: May 6th, 2023 beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Cost: Registration including morning coffee and lunch - **\$40.00**

Need assistance with registration: Call: Janice Buchner at 519-866-3754; OR Diana Grant

at 905-431-9826



MARY MARTHA YARD SALE: Saturday, June 3, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm (in coordination with the Fitzgerald Neighbourhood Association. Please consider bringing in items for sale, volunteering to help and inviting friends to attend!



Seminary Golf Tournament: **Monday, June 5, 2023** at Conestoga Golf Club in Conestogo, Ontario (north of Waterloo). Registration is now open. \$125 per person registration fee includes lunch, green fees, golf cart, full dinner, and prizes. To register a foursome, go to: <https://concordia-seminary.ca/golf2023/> If you have questions, call the seminary at 905-688-2362. Deadline for registration is May 22, 2023.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: **Monday, July 17 to Friday, July 21.** Mark your calendars for **In-person VBS**. The program will run in the morning with an afternoon extended care for Grade 1-6. Registration forms and Volunteer forms are in narthex.

<u>Last Sunday Attendance:</u> April 23th, 2023 Attn: 10 a.m. –96 SOUL:					
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or – (--)</u>
Current:	297,841.00	5,840.02	1,573.00	75,534.97	(21,836.13)
LCC Missions	17,000.00	333.33	122.00	5,233.00	324.69
Property Improvement:			87.00	2,049.00	

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP? We are setting up a schedule to take meals to Eduardo and Daniela to help them during Daniela’s very challenging recovery from surgery. (*along with having a new baby*). If you would be interested in helping with a meal, please speak to, or email Carole (carolepink121@gmail.com) Thanks :)

EFT Donations: Beginning June 1, Christ Lutheran will assume responsibility from Lutheran East District for processing monthly Electronic Fund Transfer donations. If you are a current EFT donor, you will receive paperwork (please check your CLC mailslot). If you have ever considered making your donations via EFT, forms and instructions are available on the bulletin board in the Narthex. Your new contact for EFT service will be Karen McCumber.

L.A.M.P. MISSION TEAM: If you are interested in joining a L.A.M.P mission team, please contact Pastor Jeff Swords (905-931-3165). L.A.M.P. is a frontline mission experience through the sharing of Christ's love, Grace, and Promise of resurrection. Our team strives to demonstrate these same attributes through a VBS program, community presence, and friendship. Our assigned community is Kingfisher Lake in Northern Ontario. The date is either July 25 - Aug. 3, or, a shortened trip of July 28 - Aug. 3. We are asking for your support in various ways: by either joining our team (there is always room for your love), through prayer to combat Satan's disruption, or, through financial support (the cost per person is approximately \$1,500).

SOUL is in need of nail polish. If you have any bottles that didn’t suit you, are older, or nearly empty, we would appreciate them for an upcoming craft project on May 11th. Feel free to reach out to Jenn Hoefts. Any donations can be placed in our mailbox or Pastor’s office.

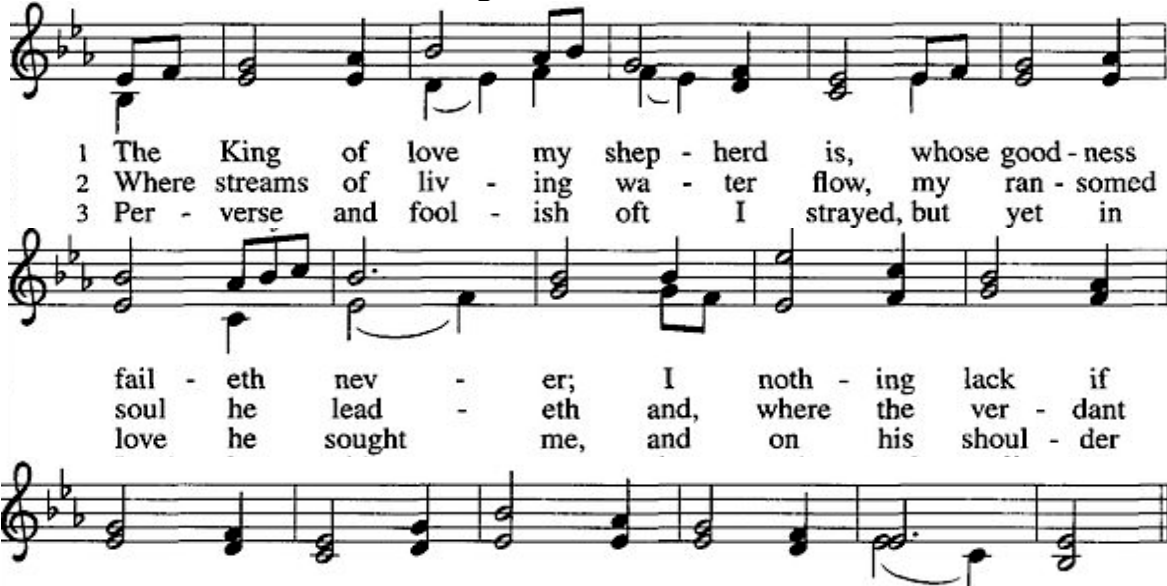
MORNING PRAISE

Adapted from Lutheran Church of Australia Modern Matins
THE 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER + GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY
April 30, 2023 -- 10 AM Worship

GATHERING SONG:

"The King of Love"

[www. Hymnary.org](http://www.Hymnary.org)ELW



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, whose good - ness
2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, my ran - somed
3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, but yet in

fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
soul he lead - eth and, where the ver - dant
love he sought me, and on his shoul - der

I am his and he is mine for - ev - er.
pas - tures grow, with food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
gent - ly laid, and home, re - joic - ing, brought me.

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821-1877
Music: Irish tune

ST. COLUMBA
8787

SPOKEN MORNING PRAISE SCRIPTURE RESPONSES:

Open up my lips O LORD!

And my mouth will sing praises to Your Name!

Come quickly to Help me, O Lord

And be speedy to keep me away from harm.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As it was then, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Praise to You, O Christ!

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give glory to our God, our Light and our Life!

O Come, let us worship Him.

PSALMODY

Psalm 96 "All Creatures of our God"



1. All crea- tures of our God and King, Lift
2. O rush - ing wind and breez - es soft, O
3. O flow - ing wa - ter, pure and clear, Make

up your voice and with us sing: Al - le - lu - ia!
clouds that ride the winds a - loft, Sing your prais - es!
mu - sic for your Lord to hear. Sing your prais - es!

[Crescendo]
Al - le - lu - ia! O burn - ing sun with gold - en beam
Al - le - lu - ia! O ris - ing morn, in praise re - joice,
Al - le - lu - ia! O fire so mas - ter - ful and bright,

And sil - ver moon with soft - er gleam,
O lights of eve - ning, find a voice.
Pro - vid - ing us with warmth and light.

Sing your prais - es! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Altissima, omnipotente bon Signore; St. Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226; tr. by William H. Draper, 1855-1933, alt.
Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN, LM with alleluia; Geistliche Kirchengesänge, Cologne, 1623, harm. by Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958

PSALM 23: *(spoken together)* *King James' Version*

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou 5repares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

We pray—Almighty and eternal God, You have brought back from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, to call us into His flock by His Word. Send us Your Holy Spirit, so that we may hear the voice of the good Shepherd and faithfully follow Him. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord and Shepherd, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE SCRIPTURES

First Reading: *Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47*

[The gathered worshippers] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the 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.**

The Epistle: *1 Peter 2: 19-25*

For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL VERSE: *"He Lives! He Lives!"*

**I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today
I know that He is living, whatever people say
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer
And just the time I need Him He's always near**

**He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today
He walks with me and talks with me, along life's narrow way
He lives, He lives, Salvation to impart---**

You ask me how I know He lives? He lives--- with-in my heart!

Holy Gospel: *St. John 10:1-10*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. John, the 10th chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus says:] ‘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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to You, O Christ!**

CHOIR ANTHEM: *“You Are Mine”*

I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear
You will hear My voice – I claim you as My choice
Be still, and know I am near, I am hope for all who are hopeless
I am eyes for all who long to see; In the shadows of the night,
I will be your light; Come and rest in Me

Do not be afraid, I am with you – I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me – I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine. I am strength for all the despairing
Healing for the ones who dwell in shame
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free
And all will know My name; Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name; Come and follow Me
I will bring you home – I love you and you are mine

I am the Word that leads all to freedom
I am the peace the world cannot give
I will call your name, embracing all your pain
Stand up, now, walk, and live; Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me – I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine; Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name. Come and follow Me
I will bring you home—I love you and you are mine.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

GOSPEL SONG:

"Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us"

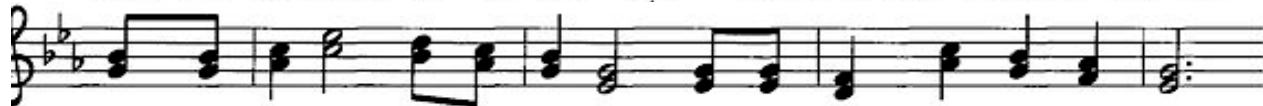
www.Hymnary.orgELW



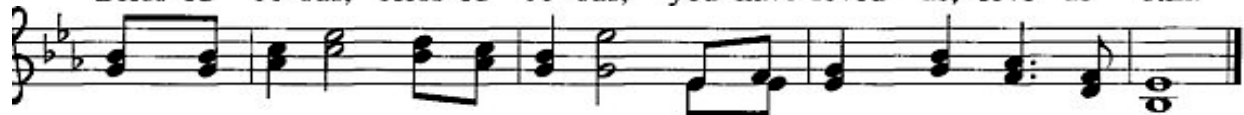
1 Sav - ior like a shep - herd lead us; much we need your ten - der care.
 2 We are yours; in love be - friend us, be the guard - ian of our way;
 3 You have prom - ised to re - ceive us, poor and sin - ful though we be;
 4 Ear - ly let us seek your fa - vor, ear - ly let us do your will;



In your pleas - ant pas - tures feed us, for our use your fold pre - pare.
 keep your flock, from sin de - fend us, seek us when we go a - stray.
 you have mer - cy to re - lieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.
 bless - ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, with your love our spir - its fill.



Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, you have bought us; we are yours.
 Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, hear us chil - dren when we pray.
 Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, ear - ly let us turn to you.
 Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, you have loved us, love us still.



Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, you have bought us; we are yours.
 Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, hear us chil - dren when we pray.
 Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, ear - ly let us turn to you.
 Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, you have loved us, love us still.

lyric: attr. Dorothy A. Thrupp, 1779-1847
 music: William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868

BRADBURY
 8787D

MESSAGE

EASTER SEASON PRAISE SONG: *"Who You Say I Am"*



1. Who am I ___ that the high - est King would wel - come me.
 2. Free at last, _ He has ran - somed me, His grace runs deep.



I was lost _ but He brought me in. Oh, His love for me. Oh, His love for
 While I was a slave to sin, Je - sus died for me. Yes, He died for



me. Who the Son sets free, oh is free in - deed. I'm a child of
 me.

God, yes I am. In my Fa - ther's
house there's a place for me. I'm a child of God, yes I
am. I am cho - sen, not for - sak - en. I
am who You say I am. You are for me, not a - gainst me. I
am who You say I am. I am (Oh) I am who You say I am.
Who the Son sets free, oh is free in - deed. I'm a
Fa - ther's house there's a place for me. I'm a
child of God, yes I am.
child of God, yes I am.

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THE OFFERINGS *are gathered.*

PRAYER

As sheep trust their shepherd for guidance and protection, let us turn to our God in prayer, certain that he hears our voice for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son. O Gracious Lord, be with your whole church on earth, and the church in this land. Keep her faithful, and let your message of forgiveness through Christ be heard and believed.

We pray to You: **Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Be with our national Synod church body and all of our partner churches and believers everywhere. We commend to you Lutheran Church Canada parishes and church leaders, and all men and women, young and old, who serve You. Uphold all in their daily callings with true faith and a godly life.

We pray to You: **Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Bless Canada, and help those in authority to strive for harmony, honesty and justice. Remember our King, Charles, our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, our Premier, Doug Ford, those in our local government, and all who maintain order and safety with wisdom and care during our time of lockdown.

We pray to You: **Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Guide our industry, our education, our arts, culture and leisure activities, our mass media, our science and technology. Be with the unemployed and the overworked, the sick and the aged, the poor, the needy and the lonely. We especially remember today any who are sick or in need of healing—(*names added here...*).

We pray to You: **Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Seek out those who have wandered away from Your presence. Bring them back to your fold. Help us all to care for our lost brothers and sisters and to help where we can to remind them of your constant goodness and kindness. As You gather Your sheep from all corners of the world, and do not allow even one of your flock to be lost, may we and all people hear your voice, and be gathered into the one flock of our Lord Jesus Christ;

We pray to You: **Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Almighty God and Father, since You have given us grace at this time with one faithful voice to make our common concerns to You and as You have promised that when two or three are gathered in Your name You will grant their requests, fulfill now, O God, the desires and prayers of Your servants, as may be best for them, giving us in this world knowledge of Your truth, and in the world to come, everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Who lives and rules with You, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, within our world today. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER:

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

Our Father, Who are in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name....

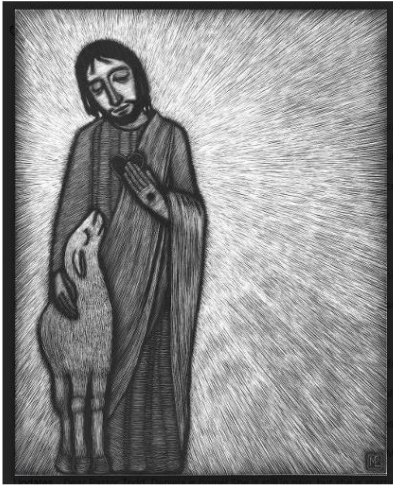
LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER:

I thank You, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. And I pray that You would keep me this day, also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe have no power over me. Amen.

BLESSING & BENEDICTION:

Let us praise our Lord: **Praise God.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, + be with you all. **Amen.**



JESUS COMES THAT ALL MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIM.

LAST SONG:

"I Am Jesus' Little Lamb"

LSB # 740



1 I am Je - sus' lit - tle lamb; ev - er glad at
 2 Day by day, at home, a - way, Je - sus is my
 3 Who is hap - py as I am, e - ven now the



heart I am; for my Shep - herd gent - ly guides me,
 staff and stay. When I hun - ger, Je - sus feeds me,
 Shep - herd's lamb? And when my short life is end - ed,



knows my need and well pro - vides me, loves me ev - 'ry
 in - to pleas - ant pas - tures leads me; when I thirst, he
 by his an - gel host at - tend - ed, he shall fold me



day the same, e - ven calls me by my name.
 bids me go where the qui - et wa - ters flow.
 to his breast, there with - in his arms to rest.

TEXT: Henriette Louise von Hayn (1776). Tr. anonymous
 TUNE: Herrnhut (c. 1740); C. Gregor *Choralbuch* (1784)

7.7.8.8.7.7.
 WEIL ICH JESU SCHÄFLEIN BIN (82 E)

REV. TODD HOEFFS
EASTER 4 [Good Shepherd Sunday]
John 10:1-10
April 30, 2023
“I’m On the LAM but I ain’t no SHEEP”

Before wall crosses and stained-glass windows and picture Bibles, Jesus as the Good Shepherd held the most common image of hope and comfort.

As early as 200 AD [roughly 165 years after Jesus’ resurrection] paintings of Jesus as a shepherd with sheep could be found on walls of many Christian gathering places.

Sheep and shepherds had been woven into the cultural fabric.

Sheep wool, milk, meat and sacrificial offerings in the Temple kept them a primary need for middle-eastern life.

Shepherds and sheep stood on many a hill in the ancient world. Sheep are the Old Testament image for the people of Israel. Think of the beloved 23rd Psalm -- A Lamb and a Shepherd are both images for our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He *defends*, *knows* and *loves* us, for we are His sheep. Shepherds and sheep are not as familiar to us. Lambs and sheep look so cute and we’d no doubt want one as a pet. [Where do sheep get their wool cut? The baa-baashop]

Truth be told, sheep are smelly, since dirt and grime get matted into their wool.

They are stubborn. They are always on the lookout for the sweetest, clover-like grass.

In fact they risk their lives just to eat a bit of it.

Farmers in general do not like sheep that much as they tend to graze

But pulling the entire blade of grass up, root and all, leaving fields barren.

Sheep are similar to humans.

They rely on following other sheep, even to slaughter, or over a cliff. It’s an instinct.

They can be trained to follow a distinctive call, or a unique musical melody.

[Woolah woolah woolah]

Sheep learn to hear their name and come when called. Sheep follow a shepherd they know well, But usually follow other sheep. Sheep remember faces. Even humans who work with them regularly. Sheep remember who treats them well, and even more, remember who handles them harshly. Harsh words are easily remembered. There is power in loving praise,

And kindness goes far in building relationships. When grazing, sheep keep at least 4-5 other sheep in view. They’re very social animals and will hide out in a flock. Sheep can spot danger from up to 1500 yards away, but they have trouble finding a half-open gate without help.

We humans tend to follow each other more instinctively than we follow our Good Shepherd,

as rebellion is part of our DNA. Jesus' voice is distinctive by what and how we hear from Scripture. We tend to remember old hurts and grudges, and we run away from potential encounters with those who have hurt us in the past. We tend to stick together with the same 2-3 people we know best, keeping them in our sights and huddling together when we sense an attack coming our way. Isolation is deadly and can threaten our very lives. We spend a lot of time looking behind us, making it hard to follow our Lord. We like doing things our own way and getting credit for it. We are our own boss. We also attract dirt, scrapes, problems and stress. And yet, God claims us as his own by hooking us in with Jesus' cross. He knows each of us by name. Trusting in His presence that never leaves us gives us a source of renewal and safety. Jesus' warning to sheep and shepherds is aimed at His critics, the religious leaders of the day. Stories about sheep and shepherds, thieves and strangers reveals the huge difference between believers and false followers. The Pharisees believed themselves to be the guardians of the people. Jesus calls them "thieves and robbers". They steal people far away from a loving God and rob them of access to keep control. Jesus is all about leading people to a restored relationship with God. Calling a religious leader a hired hand is a terrible embarrassing insult. True children of Israel had never been viewed as such. Hired hand in John's Gospel is a military term for mercenaries. In the past, outsiders hired to help an army fight and defeat an enemy. Usually motivated by money. Pharisees are. The chief priests are. Jesus calls them lovers of money when they ought to love others. Those who are not for the people of God are against them. It's not different today, If pastors or churches allow unbiblical rules and cliques and attitudes to rule, It overshadows the open loving welcome of Christ Which gathers in all sheep from all sheep-pens. Pastors and the church can be the face of welcome Or the face of disinterest and negativity. We can't just say it's the culture's fault church's are not full. Some time we have to understand what role we've all played in this. At times we've made a better door than a window Where Jesus' face of grace might be viewed by others who need us. Sadly, this destroys trust in Jesus alone, who is the Good Shepherd. For not only is He our shepherd, but God's Lamb of divine sacrifice And the entry way into the eternal sheep pen of Heaven. Shepherds are so careful not to lose even a single sheep They lay their body across the entryway at night, even asleep,

Just to protect the sheep from wild animals and thieves. This our Shepherd does for us and for the every single lost lamb When He lays down on the cross as nails attach Him to the wood. His death and shed Blood is LIFE. Protection, comfort, love, care. Greater love has no one than this, that He lay His life down for His friends. By faith, we as sheep are all Jesus' friends We hear His voice and believe in Him. Which takes a trusting relationship. Trust builds over time As we remember that God has always come through for us, Even when we couldn't sense it or see it. For we're no different than those listening to Jesus then. We have just as difficult a time as they did, when it comes to hearing Jesus clearly, and following where He leads us. We must beware of strange voices.

When something doesn't sound right we check it out thoroughly. Is what we are hearing Christ centred? Are we moving forward, letting the Gospel lead? Does it glorify God or glorify the self? Is it life under the cross or under legalism? Then, we learn to recognize the Good Shepherd's voice by remaining a life-long student of the Scriptures. That means reading it, listening to it, Not to use as a rule book for a word that is always transforming And shaping us and calling us back into trust with our Lord. This we do not as lone lambs but sheep in a flock

with a shepherd. Just as a choir sings best hearing each others' parts. Or an orchestra follows the director and plays at the right time with other instruments. Artists work well with other artists, doctors in medical teams are very effective. We are not born wanting to listen and follow Jesus. We are given a listening identity as baptized brothers and sisters of Jesus.

We practice listening as the Holy Spirit help us ignore the many other voices competing for our attention. We practice listening together, as a community of faith, for what our Shepherd invites us to be and to do. Like good sheep, we value our place in the flock, staying together, supporting each other in our journey toward Christ-likeness. This means participating in this thing we call "church," being an active member of the body of Christ. We don't stray from the flock, putting ourselves at risk. We stick together. We walk together. We support each other. And we bring in other sheep along the way. So that we all can enjoy life. Sometimes this will be a few days of less stress. Sometimes it will be in the form of gratitude and appreciation. It may be that we are content with the daily bread Jesus offers. Abundant life is never ending life, something not only waiting for us in Heaven, But it comes to us as peace and joy and love now, in this life.

It comes from daily trusting Jesus, Who gives His own life and destroys death's evil power once and for all, so that we, his own dear sheep, can live with Him in peace and safety.

Jesus remains our entry, our gate, the way we enter, in Him and with Him.

He's right here Enveloping our life into His.

He gives us the oil of healing, His wine of life-blood, His bread of Life,
His Body in our bodies,

Calling us forward by name, entering into Him Who is the gate,
With other sheep

No longer lost, just found in Jesus, listening to His life-giving voice.

So when we see sheep and lambs

We can remember the protective Shepherd Who's always there.

Amen.