

## Worship resources Easter 4

If we have become accustomed to think of resurrection life as something that we receive and enjoy primarily as individuals, this week's Lectionary readings will come as something of a shock. Through the interesting



collage of metaphors – sheep and Shepherd, suffering and care, life and togetherness in the community of faith – we are drawn into recognising that the life Christ offers us is always shared. If we are to know the reality of the resurrection, we will discover it as we care for one another and share life in mutual compassion and protection.

May we be drawn into unity and communion with God and each other as we seek for life in our worship.

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**The First Reading** - Acts 2: 42-47

We have heard Peter's first recorded sermon, and its dramatic effect. Now we discover how these new Christians came to develop a new pattern of life and worship together.

**The Psalm - Psalm 23**

David's famous psalm of confidence and hope in God's care, guidance and provision.

**The Second Reading - 1 Peter 2: 19-25**

We continue on these Easter Sundays to read a letter directed to Gentile Christians. For all those who are humiliated or persecuted for their faith, Jesus is the supreme example and pattern to be honoured and followed.

**The Gospel Reading - John 10: 1-10**

Jesus uses a familiar image from the Hebrew Scriptures of shepherds and sheep. He is himself the good shepherd; he calls us to follow him, and teaches that he is himself the only way the sheep may be safely gathered.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Acts%202:%2042-47%0A%20BOR%0ANehemiah%209:%206-15%0Acw%20Psalm%2023%0A1%20Peter%202:%2019-25%0AJohn%2010:%201-10](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%202:%2042-47%0A%20BOR%0ANehemiah%209:%206-15%0Acw%20Psalm%2023%0A1%20Peter%202:%2019-25%0AJohn%2010:%201-10)

**COLLECTS OF THE DAY**

**Collect One**

Almighty God,  
who showest to them that be in error  
the light of thy truth,  
to the intent that they may return  
into the way of righteousness;  
Grant unto all them that are admitted  
into the fellowship of Christ's Religion,  
that they may eschew those things  
that are contrary to their profession,  
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Collect Two**

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:  
Raise us, who trust in him,  
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,

that we may seek those things which are above,  
where he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

*The leader of the Intercessions stands in the middle of the congregation. The people respond to the prayers as indicated.*

Rejoicing in the mighty acts of God who has delivered his people from sin and death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Let us lift our voices and pray,

*Leader* Risen Lord,  
*People* **Hear our Prayer.**

Let us give thanks to God for the multitude of blessings he showers upon us:

For our lives and for those whom we love,  
For the beauty of this home God has created for us,  
For our families and our friendships,  
Let us give thanks to the God of Life.

*Special intentions are offered silently or aloud.*

*Leader* Risen Lord,  
*People* **Hear our Prayer.**

Let us pray for the Church, that it may carry forward the redemptive works of God:

For our clergy and our bishops,  
For the many lay people who serve the church,  
And serve the world through the church.  
For those gather here in worship and prayer.

*Special intentions are offered silently or aloud.*

*Leader* Risen Lord,  
*People* **Hear our Prayer.**

Let us pray for the newly baptized, that the joy of Easter may ever grow within them, and that the Spirit may guide them in lives of active faith.

*Special intentions are offered silently or aloud.*

*Leader* Risen Lord,  
*People* **Hear our Prayer.**

Let us pray for the nations and peoples of the world, that the powers that oppress and destroy may decline, And that justice, peace, and prosperity be lifted up.

*Special intentions are offered silently or aloud.*

*Leader* Risen Lord,  
*People* **Hear our Prayer.**

Let us pray for those who are sick, those who suffer, those who struggle: and who have died:

That the hope born of Easter give them peace, acceptance and renewal, And that through their struggles they may come into closer communion with the God who redeems and restores.

*Special intentions are offered silently or aloud.*

*Leader* Risen Lord,  
*People* **Hear our Prayer.**

*The celebrant adds a concluding collect.*

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2**

*Presider or deacon*

Gathered in the care of the good shepherd and guardian of our souls, let us pray to God  
who knows our every need.

*Deacon or other leader*

For the holy churches in every place, and for the unity of all.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For this holy assembly and for all who gather in faith, hope, and love.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For NN and all illumined by the light of Christ.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For N our bishop and the presbyters, the deacons  
and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all those in danger and need, the sick  
and the suffering, the strayed and the lost.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For those who walk in death's dark valley.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering St \_\_\_\_\_ and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one  
another to the living God through Christ.  
To you, O Lord.

*Presider*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who soothes our head with oil and fills our  
cup with  
wine. Hear the prayers we offer for every need, and revive us with your Holy  
Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## **POST COMMUNION**

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.

## **PRAYERS**

### **On the theme of The Good Shepherd**

Holy Shepherd,  
you know your sheep by name  
and lead us to safety through the valleys of death.  
Guide us by your voice,  
that we may walk in certainty and security  
to the joyous feast prepared in your house,

were we celebrate with you forever. Amen.

Faithful Shepherd,  
You are not a hireling who runs away at the sight of danger,  
but Your fidelity was tested  
and proven on the wood of the Cross.  
Accept the gift of our gratitude  
for Your marvelous care.  
Help us to hear and follow Your voice.

Watchful Shepherd,  
who protects the flock  
and searches tirelessly  
for those who wander from the fold,  
retrieve the lost and bring them home.  
Tend and heal their wounds.

Good Shepherd,  
who lays down His Life for His sheep,  
nourish Your people with the Bread of Life,  
that we may reflect Your likeness  
and enjoy the spring of Living Water that never ends.

Amen.

### **The Dialogue of the Shepherd:**

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!  
**You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth!**

Before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh,  
**Stir up your might, and come to save us!**

Shepherd your people with your staff, O Lord;  
**The flock that belongs to you.**

For thus says the Lord God:  
**I myself will search for my sheep.**

I will seek the lost and bring back the strayed.  
**I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.**

I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them.

**They shall not fear any longer or be dismayed.**

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!

**You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth!**

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbors.

As his disciples in this age,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe  
in which we are privileged to live  
and our neighbours with whom we share it.

uOpen our hearts to your power moving  
around us and between us and within us,  
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,  
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,  
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

uHoly God,

you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,  
and to care for those who are our companions,  
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.

Seeking to be true friends of all,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

uGuide us in the path of discipleship,  
so that, as you have blessed us,  
we may be a blessing for others,  
bringing the promise of the kingdom near  
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

God invites us to bring our doubts and fears,  
our joys and concerns, our petitions and praise,  
and offer them for the earth and all its creatures.

Receive these prayers, O God,  
and transform us through them,  
that we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand  
not only what you do on our behalf,  
but what you call us to do  
so that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

Mighty God,  
in whom we know the power of redemption,  
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.  
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,  
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning  
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,  
we will share in his resurrection,  
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life  
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,  
long ago, faithful women  
proclaimed the good news  
of Jesus' resurrection,  
and the world was changed forever.  
Teach us to keep faith with them,  
that our witness may be as bold,  
our love as deep,  
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,  
you made the world in beauty,  
and restore all things in glory  
through the victory of Jesus Christ.  
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured  
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,  
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

### Meditation

Dearest Lord, Holy Lamb of God, Shepherd of the world, You lead us to respite and relief. You are our provider and sustainer and through Your providence, we will never want for Your Presence. You lead us to fields of plenty and You refresh our souls with the cool clear waters of Your spirit.

Holy Lamb of God, You are the Good Shepherd. We follow You Lord because we know Your voice. We know that You will lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. You are Yourself the Gate – we can only come to the Throne of Grace through You. And You are truly with us -- Emmanuel, God with us -- so we will not fear evil but be comforted. You came to give us life and give it to us abundantly – You have prepared Your table for us and anoint

us for service. Anoint us with Your Holy Spirit, help us to devote ourselves to Your good teachings, to worship, to fellowship and to prayer. We eat the food that You have given us, both spiritual and physical and You nourish us.

Holy Lamb of God, today we pray for our sisters and brothers, especially for those who suffer. We pray for the children – those who live in plenty, but also for those who live in want. We pray for all of those who live alone, the homebound and the aged. We pray for those who are absent from us – those who live far away, or are stationed in far places and live in great danger or those who are absent from us even though we share a house with them. We pray for those who grieve and mourn. We pray for those who are imprisoned by addiction or disease.

Holy Lamb of God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. All of us are like sheep who have gone astray -- We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. Forgive us and free us for joyful obedience.

Help us to follow the example of Christ -- He left his petitions in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. Help us to remember that He personally carried away our sins in His own body so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. Help us to rejoice that we have been healed by His wounds! Once we were wandering like lost sheep -- But now we have turned to Your Shepherd, the Guardian of our souls. All we can say is thank You and pray that Your goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. These things we pray in the name of your Son, the Holy Lamb of God, who taught us to pray saying...Our Father..... -

## **LECTIONARY NOTES     1**

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

This week the Lectionary offers a wonderful and rich connection of ideas. In this season of the resurrection, the life of Christ is still uppermost in our minds, and Jesus' promise that he has come to give life is at the heart of our reflections. The rest of the Gospel, though, and the other readings, all reflect on how life is lived when the care and compassion of God direct us. In the Acts reading we are given a glimpse at the true community of the first disciples and their care for one another. In Psalm 23 we are reminded of God's care and attention toward God's people. In Peter's letter, written to those who are being persecuted for Christ's sake, there is the assurance that their suffering is not meaningless, and that it is a sharing in Christ's sacrifice, even as God – the Shepherd and Guardian of the believers' souls – watches

over them. finally, Jesus, in speaking about his life, warns about those who pretend to care for ‘the sheep’ but don’t. In a confusing contrast he is both the Shepherd who does care, and the gate through which the true Shepherd enters to call the sheep, and through which the sheep pass in order to find pasture and life. While it is not the purpose of this short reflection to unravel all of these metaphors, the essential message is clear – the life of Jesus is given and received by mutual care, compassion and protection. The resurrection does not offer some individualised, blissful life. Rather, it calls us into a life that is shared with others who follow Christ, to whom we belong and for whom we are responsible, even as they as are called to care for us. It is only together – in community – that Christ’s life can be known and enjoyed.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** If there is one gift that modern science has given us it is the realisation of the connectedness of all things in the universe. While we have divided up our world into ever smaller groupings – nationalities, political affiliations, languages, ethnicities, regions, genders, generations, religions, cultures, economic strata, educational levels, all of these divisions are ultimately false. It is impossible to do anything to another person or group that does not have some impact on ourselves. And so, we are called, as followers of Christ, to embrace these connections, and to find in them the resurrection life that Christ promises. Like the psalmist, we can know God’s care and provision for us, but also know that this means that we are drawn into God’s house, where we are not the only inhabitants. Like the early believers we are called to share all things, to ‘do life’ together, and to endure whatever persecution or hardship we may face with the same grace and forgiveness that Christ demonstrated. And unlike the false shepherds, who care nothing for the sheep, we are both the sheep who enjoy God’s care, and the ‘shepherds’ or ‘gatekeepers’ who care for the sheep and help them to find life-giving pasture. What this interconnected experience of life means, is that we can no longer ignore what happens on the other side of the world. We are connected with the poor, the sick, the refugee and the oppressed. And, in our own way, as followers of Christ, we can use our love and compassion to change the world so that the most vulnerable people are no longer abused by “thieves and robbers” but are cared for and provided for by people who truly seek their best, and who seek a better world in which all are secure, all are provided for and all are included in the community of humanity.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** Where are the lines drawn in your community? In every church we inevitably fall into lines and divisions, splitting ourselves long lines of gender, generation, sexuality, theology, denomination and function. We tend to separate ourselves when we worship – children, adults and youth in different venues with different ‘styles’ – and when we work and live together

as church – with clergy and laity kept in their distinct compartments. But, what if all of these lines rob us of life? What if our tendency to use marketing strategies to identify ‘target markets’ and ‘felt needs’ only leads us into a lifeless uniformity? What if it is the very interconnectedness and diversity that opens us to the reality of the resurrection? In what ways can your community begin to identify and honour the connections, rather than the differences? In what ways can you begin intentionally to include those who are seen as different or ‘outside’? What would happen if the neighbourhood in which your church operates knew you as the church that connects people and that connects needs and solutions and that celebrates humanity in all of its God-given variation? In what ways could your church offer a ministry of connectedness, welcome and involvement with those who most need to be cared for and offered life in your town? Do you think that, maybe, as we seek to follow Christ’s example, we could ignore the slights and criticisms that we so easily retaliate to, and notice the ones who need to be loved and led to life? And then, do you think that maybe the people of your community would find, individually and together, a richer, more full life, as they honour and embrace the connectedness of the world?

## LECTIONARY NOTES 2

### Living an 'Awed' Life

**Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10**

We may take the "shepherd-sheep" metaphor as a way to discern our life. On the one hand there are false shepherds, false religious leaders, greedy economists, phony politicians, even mistaken parents who offer an illusionary world for their children. On the other hand, there is life with no shepherd, being on one's own, vulnerable and without resources, stumbling from one failed prospect to another.

Into this false shepherd/no shepherd world comes the gospel alternative. The reading from Acts is dominated by the term "awe" (verse 43). Those who heard apostolic preaching were drawn into awe, because the offer of another world swept them off their feet. Their lives were filled with praise, food for the day, and lively brothers and sisters who shared life with them.

But awe, so Peter writes, must be transposed into endurance, the capacity to put up with demanding disciplines and risky behaviors. Such an "awed" life, without endurance, soon burns out. Except, says Peter, we are led, fed, kept, and protected by "the shepherd and guardian of our souls" (1 Peter 2:25). This gospel reading appeals to the best-loved psalm that affirms that "goodness and mercy" is God’s way with us and delivers for us the "abundant life" of which Jesus speaks. Our mandate is to move into awe and endurance

that counters all of our false shepherds and our failed attempts at living with no shepherd.

by [Walter Brueggemann](#)

## SERMON OUTLINE 1John 10:1-10 Very truly, I tell you...

Important teaching from Jesus about his style of ministry – that of shepherding... The Shepherd was a common image in the religious thought of Israel – eg. **Psalm 23.1: *The Lord is my shepherd; Ezekiel 34.11: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them*** – portraying God's love for His people. Jesus developed that thought in the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15)... He portrays himself as the Shepherd..

**1. The Shepherd Guides:-** *He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.* In Palestine the shepherd is a common sight leading his sheep through the countryside...The sheep trustingly follow him to green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23.2 )- vital in the blazing heat of the Middle East. **The sheep a) fear the stranger:** <sup>5</sup>*They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.* In marked contrast, they **b) follow the shepherd:** and trust him to guide them...

**2. The Shepherd Guards:-** from the dangers of the wilds – wild animals or robbers - *a thief and a bandit.* **Jesus describes himself as v7 *the gate for the sheep.*** At night a shepherd would sleep at the gate of the sheepfold protecting his sheep from threat and danger.

**3. The Shepherd Gives** – his all for the sheep... He knows them and loves them – in contrast to the thief: v10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* – His Gift of Eternal Life! *Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.* <sup>10</sup>

leads to a wonderful outpouring of beautiful pastoral imagery to which people would easily relate – that of a shepherd & his sheep. They would be familiar with Ps 23 & also Ezek 34.11: *I will search for my sheep & take care of them...* Theirs was a mutually loving trusting relationship

**1. The Sheep fear the Stealer 1:** anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief & a bandit... Imagine the panic in the fold when they realise that mischief is afoot & they are under threat – imagine the noise they would make! Such theft was common in Jesus' day hence the allusion.

**2. Follow the Shepherd 2-4:** He was known & loved <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.... & trusted by **a) The gatekeeper** – <sup>3</sup> opens the gate for him... **b) the sheep** - hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. Those who follow Jesus will be saved, v9 & will come in and go out & find pasture.

**3. Flee the Stranger 5f:** <sup>5</sup>They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. He alone is the Good Shepherd – may we His sheep follow trustingly wherever he leads!

## ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

**The characteristics of a healthy church.** This is quite long - it is a sermon from a pentecostal perspective - which will provide about three anglican sermons! But there are good themes and resources here

<http://bible.org/seriespage/characteristics-healthy-church-acts-241-47>

### 1 Peter 2: 19-25

The preacher reflects on a scary experience on a flight. His theme is that "the storms will come and go, my friends, but we do not face them alone. Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, has come alongside us to show us the way. He has promised to guide us home, and he is ready here and now to offer the gift of trust to you and to me." He draws on St Teresa of Avila and a Quaker woman as examples of trust.

[http://day1.org/944-trust at 28000 feet](http://day1.org/944-trust-at-28000-feet)

["The Sheepfold," the Rev. Adam Thomas, Day 1](http://day1.org/2919-young-leaders-series-iii-the-sheepfold)

[http://day1.org/2919-young leaders series iii the sheepfold](http://day1.org/2919-young-leaders-series-iii-the-sheepfold)

["God's Most Difficult Miracle," the Rev. Dr. Donovan Drake, Day 1](http://day1.org/1089-gods-most-difficult-miracle)

[http://day1.org/1089-gods most difficult miracle](http://day1.org/1089-gods-most-difficult-miracle)

## CHILDREN

The jobs of a shepherd

<http://www.thechildrenssermon.com/john10b.html>

[Worshiping with Children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/year-fourth-sunday-of-easter-may-11-2014.html), Easter 4A, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/year-fourth-sunday-of-easter-may-11-2014.html>

[Gathering](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/year-fourth-sunday-of-easter-may-11-2014.html), from the United Church of Canada. Includes sermon seeds, liturgical ideas, "with children," hymn suggestions, choral suggestions etc, 2014. .rtf file at this link.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/year-fourth-sunday-of-easter-may-11-2014.html>

[Proclaiming Faith](http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm), discussion, prayer, activities for primary grades, activities.

[http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming\\_faith.cfm](http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm)

["What We Need Most"](http://annashosannas.net/Easter-4A.php) Children's Lesson for Fourth Sunday in Easter from Anna's Hosannas.

<http://annashosannas.net/Easter-4A.php>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html), Easter 4, at *word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary* by Larry Broding.

<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[The King Of Love My Shepherd Is](#)

[Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us](#)

[The Church's One Foundation](#)

[Blest Be The Tie That Binds](#)

[We Shall Go Out With Hope Of Resurrection](#)

[Everyone Under The Sun](#) (*Link to Yahoo Listening Page*)

You Are: [Mp3](#); [Chord Chart](#)

[All Are Welcome](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Though We Are Many](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

**Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com) with the message Passwords in the title**