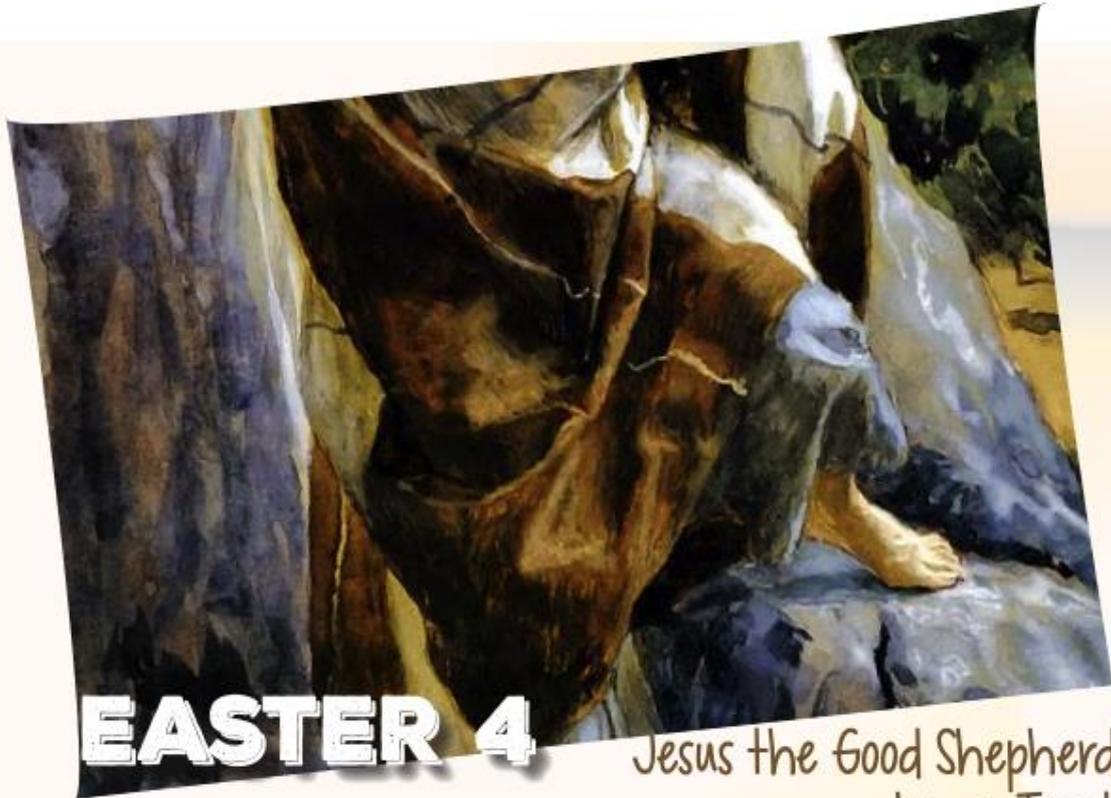




**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Leigh Memorial
Uniting Church



EASTER 4

Jesus the Good Shepherd
James Tissot

**shepherding
life's wintry terrain**

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/5199089657>

Meeting ID: 519 908 9657
Or Dial by your location +61 2 8015 6011 Australia

WELCOME

A warm welcome as we gather together on this fourth Sunday of Easter!

LIGHTING OF THE EASTER CANDLE

Today we light the Easter candle,
proclaiming the transforming power of God.
Today we celebrate: new life, new joy, new possibilities.
Christ is alive and living among us!

The candle is lit

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Burrumattagal people of the Darug Nation, the first inhabitants of this place, as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their ancient culture, their elders past and present and their emerging leaders. We acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area. We honour them for their custodianship of the land, on which we gather today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Shepherding God,
you create life from the mud of the earth;
you draw forth light from the shadowed corners of chaos;
your goodness and mercy are our closest friends.

Jesus our Shepherd,
you open eyes shuttered by ego, culture,
misrecognition and prejudice;
you heal lives shattered by bitterness;
you create pools of still grace in our stress-filled hearts.

Holy Spirit our companion,
you plant seeds in every shadowed valley,
seeds of goodness and mercy deep within our souls,
that we would bear fruit for others and self;
you awaken us from our troubled sleep,
that we might be a light to the world.

Adapted, Thom M Shuman

HYMN *I am that great and fiery force* (Tune 439 TiS)
I am that great and fiery force
sparkling in every thing that lives;
in shining of the river's course,
in greening grass that glory gives.

I shine in glitter on the seas,
in burning sun, in moon and stars.
In unseen wind, in verdant trees
I breathe within, both near and far.

And where I breathe there is no death,
and meadows glow with beauties rife.
I am in all, the spirit's breath,
the thundered word, for I am Life.
Hildegard of Bingen, 12th Cent.

PRAYER

Because of sin

you would not enter into your glory
in the way your truth had intended.
Your garden was locked up,
and so we could not receive your fruits.
This is why you made the Word,
your only-begotten Son,
a gatekeeper.

Catherine of Siena 1347-1380
The Prayers of Catherine of Siena

GOD HELP US TO FIND OUR CONFESSION

God help us to find our confession;
The truth within us
which is hidden from our mind;
The beauty or the ugliness
we see elsewhere
But never in ourselves;
The stowaway which is smuggled
Into the dark side of the heart,
Which puts the heart off balance
and causes it pain,

Which wearies and confuses us,
Which tips us in false directions
and inclines us to destruction,
The load which is not carried squarely
Because it is carried in ignorance.

God help us to find our confession.
Help us across
the boundary of our understanding.
Lead us into the darkness
that we may find what lies concealed;
That we may confess it
towards the light;
That we may carry our truth
in the centre of our heart;
That we may carry our cross wisely
And bring harmony into our world.

Amen.

The Prayer Tree by Michael Leunig

WORDS OF GRACE & CHANGE

Jesus Christ, the compassionate shepherd,
always journeys with us.
The Shepherd's touch forever gentle,
always strong,
inviting new forms of identity,
shaping fresh faith,
inciting freedom to lay down the past,
inflaming the sharing of power equally, justly, compassionately.
Let us live differently!
We give thanks to God for new life.

HYMN *Bring many names (TiS 182)*

- 1 Bring many names, beautiful and good,
celebrate, in parable and story,
holiness in glory,
living, loving God.
Hail and hosanna!
bring many names!

- 2 Strong mother God, working night and day,
planning all the wonders of creation,
setting each equation
genius at play:
Hail and hosanna,
strong mother God!

- 3 Warm father God, hugging every child,
feeling all the strains of human living,
caring and forgiving
till we're reconciled:
Hail and hosanna,
warm father God!

- 4 Old, aching God, gray with endless care,
calmly piercing evil's new disguises,
glad of good surprises,
wiser than despair:
Hail and hosanna,
old, aching God!

- 5 Young, growing God, eager, on the move,
saying no to falsehood and unkindness,
crying out for justice,
giving all you have:
Hail and hosanna,
young, growing God!

- 6 Great, living God, never fully known,
joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
closer yet than breathing,
everlasting home:
Hail and hosanna,
great, living God!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 23 (Alternative reading)

O my Beloved, You are my shepherd, I shall not want;
You bring me to green pastures for rest and lead me beside still
waters, renewing my spirit. You restore my soul. You lead me in the
path of goodness to follow Love's way.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow and of death, I
am not afraid; for You are ever with me; your rod and your staff they
guide me, they give me strength and comfort.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of all my fears; you
bless me with oil, my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life; and I
shall dwell in the heart of the Beloved forever.

(Psalms for Praying: an Invitation to wholeness, by Nan C. Merrill)

John 10:11-18 (Inclusive Text)



Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. The Good shepherd lays down their life for their sheep. "The hirelings, since they are not the shepherds and the sheep do not belong to them, abandon the sheep and run away as soon as they see a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep. "I am the good shepherd. I

know my own and my own know me, just as God, who sent me, knows me, and I know God.

"And I lay down my life for the sheep. There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well.

"They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd.

"God loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

"No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to take it up again. "And this is the command I have been given

by the One who sent me."

RESPONSE

*O God our nurturer,
may your word live in us.
And colour our living. Amen!*

SONG **Meet me in the middle of the air**

Paul Kelly & The Storm Water Boys, Foggy Highway

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g34-nB3oym4>

i am your true shepherd
i will leave you there
beside still waters
come and meet me in the middle of the air
i will meet you in the middle of the air

i will lay you down
in pastures green and fair
every soul shall be restored
i will meet them in the middle of the air
come and meet me in the middle of the air

through the lonesome valleys
my rod and staff you'll bear
fear not deaths dark shadows
come and meet me in the middle of the air
i will meet you in the middle of the air

with oil i shall annoint you
the table i shall prepare
your cup will runneth over
come and meet me in the middle of the air
i will meet you in the middle of the air

in my house you'll dwell forever
ye shall not want for care
surely goodness and mercy will follow you
come and meet me in the middle of the air
i will
meet you in the middle of the air

come and meet me in the middle of the air
i will meet you in the middle of the air

come and meet me in the middle of the air
i will meet you in the middle of the air
i will meet you in the middle of the air

REFLECTION

SONG *Anywhere You Walk* (In the face of a Jew)
<https://grahamkendrick.co.uk/content/graham-kendrick-songs/cresta-run/anywhere-you-walk-in-the-face-of-a-jew>

1. In the face of a Jew
 In the eyes of a peasant
 Refugee child
 In an age of oppression

2. Creeping 'cross the stateline
 Living on the breadline
 Somehow growing up
 Like a flower in the desert

3. Under martial law
 Jackboot justice
 One of the poor
 One of the hungry

4. Numbered with the rejects
 Mocked by the elite
 Political dissident
 Man of grief

*Anywhere you walk
He's been there before
Anything you feel
He felt more
Anywhere you walk*

5. Tried without a lawyer
Accused by liars
Abandoned by justice
Convicted by a riot

6. Offered as a scapegoat
Sentenced without evidence
Betrayed by a close friend
Silenced for convenience

*Anywhere you walk
He's been there before
Anything you feel
He felt more
Anywhere you walk*

Graham Kendrick Copyright © 1981 Make Way Music,

OFFERING

Receive these our gifts, O God.
We place them in your hands and ask you guidance
as we use them to bring compassion into the world.

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

O God, loving Shepherd in Jesus,
we know that so many people in our world
have little experience of the sanctuary of your love
or your abundant life.

Hear our prayers, O God.

In this time of this pandemic,
we pray for our congregations as we face the pandemic,
for our leaders and health care workers,
for our community where we live,
for all of us in Australia and the world.

The people offer their prayers

Where the hungry wait in despair:

***May we all respond and fill with your plenty, O God,
move our lives towards hospitality and sharing.***

Where the exploited trudge through each day in tiredness:

***Bring to them your rest, O Christ,
and raise in us a strong commitment to justice.***

Where the people fear and die amid violence and war:

***Come to them with your peace, O God,
and give wisdom to our reconciling acts.***

Where people are lost and lonely:

***carry them in your loving arms
and open our lives to gather them in, O God.***

If we are afraid to leave the safe places in life:

Take our hands and lead us into the world, O Christ
***that we may grow and change
and meet the strangers with love.***

Lift up our hearts this day,

that we may hold firm to the faith,

daring to go beyond where we have ever been,

free to venture in your name

and listening for your true voice

in every person and place. ***This we pray in faith, Amen!***

HYMN *Make me a channel of your peace* (TiS, 607)

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring love
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

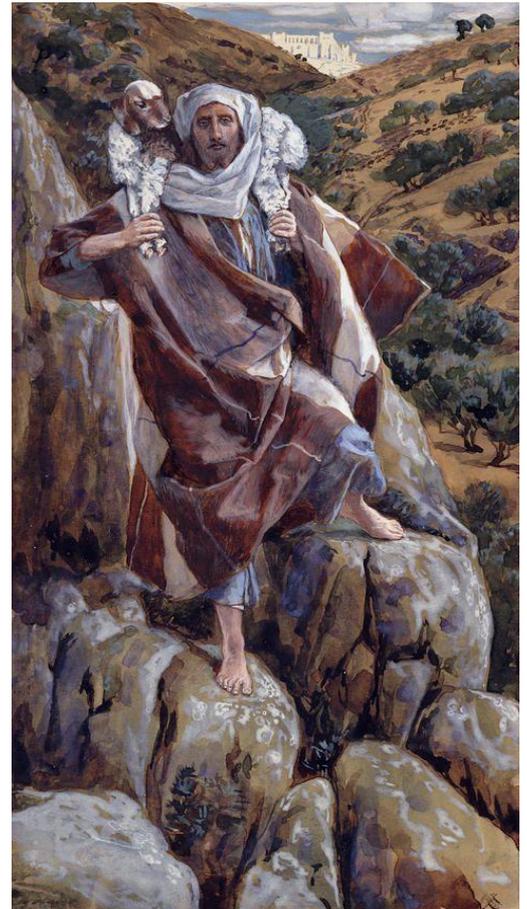
*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
Or to be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
Or to be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
Or to be loved as to love with all my soul*



BLESSING

Today may we find
the still waters alongside us,
and the green pastures stretched out beyond us.

May God prepare a table before us,
spread with everlasting
goodness and mercy.
And may each day of our lives
be spent in the house of Divine love.
Amen.

